Book World

NOT ANOTHER BORING LITERARY MAGAZINE

Readings
Readings Kids
2019 WINNER
Grandma Z

INSIDE THE BOOTH WITH

RAMON DE OCAMPO

NAT AMOORE

NOT JUST ANOTHER KIDS' AUTHOR

LSODE SQUIGL CLUB

BOOKCLUB REIMAGINED

ERIN McCLEAN ILLUSTRATED

WHERE THE WILD WORDS ARE

BY ASHER PACKMAN

SOMERSET **Storyfest**™

storyfest.com.au

Inside the Magic of Storyfest

TY ALLAN JACKSON

BUILT DIFFERENT

TY 'S STORY

TONY FLOWERS

DRAWING FROM EXPERIENCE

ISSUE #05

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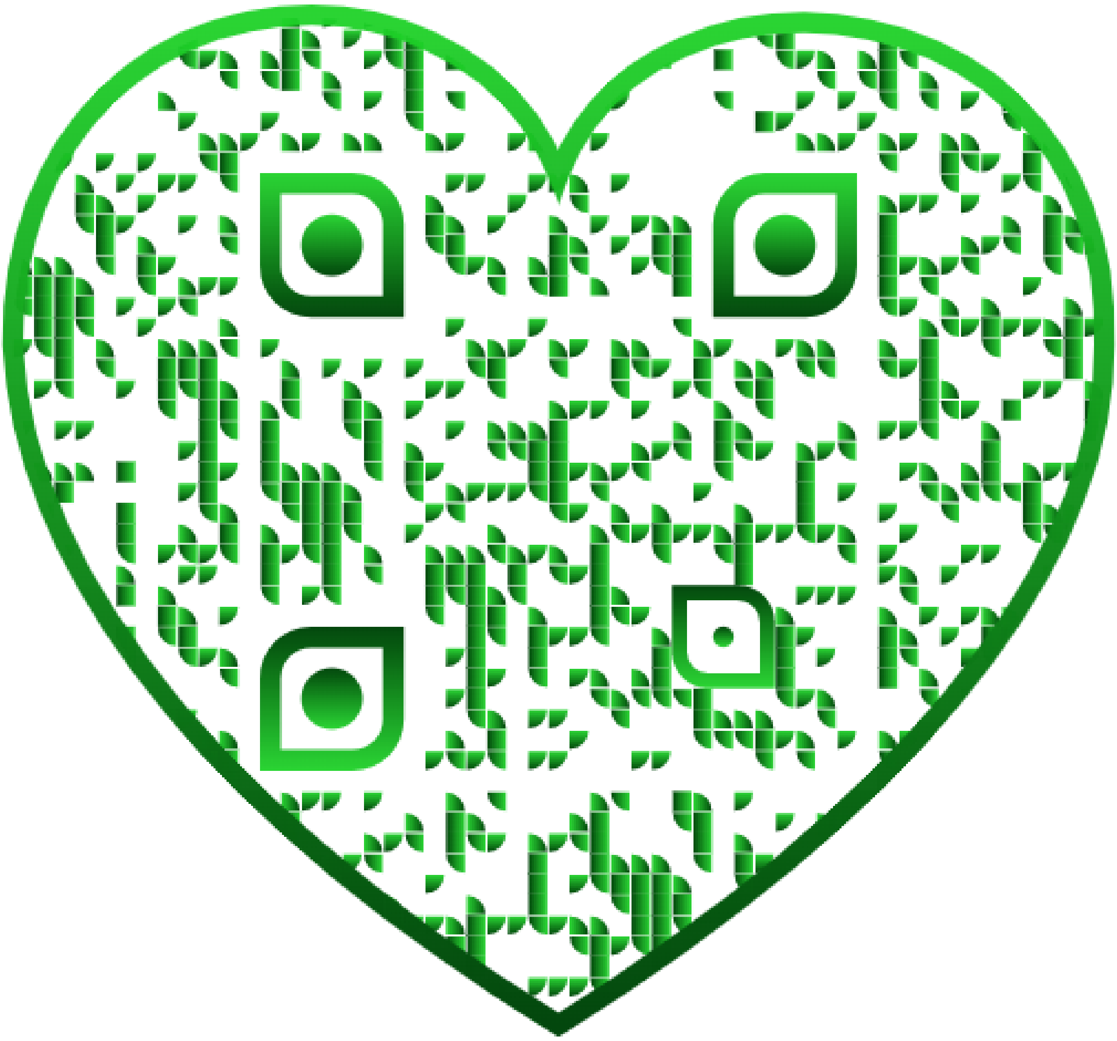

NEW

Website Launch

Welcome to the new home of Book World Club where stories bring us together, retreats restore us, and book clubs keep the conversation going.

WWW.BOOKWORLD.CLUB

A Magazine. A Movement. A Community

Book World

Welcome To Book World

Ridgemill Estate Retreat With Author Emma Grey

Book World Club
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Online Book Club

Join Our Online Book Club

Our new digital book club has just launched! With author appearances, surprise goodies sent to your door, and space to connect with other readers, this is book club the Book World way—and we'd love for you to be part of it.

We believe reading is personal. And being part of a book club should feel like being welcomed into something real.

Book World Retreats

Readers Retreats for Book Lovers

Our retreats are a chance to slow down, breathe out, and spend time with books and people who love them as much as you do.

Beautiful locations, long lunches, fireside chats, and thoughtful conversation, these weekends are for building friendships, not obligation. Come as you are, leave feeling restored.

A weekend for you, with people you didn't know you needed.

Book World Magazine

Book World Magazine

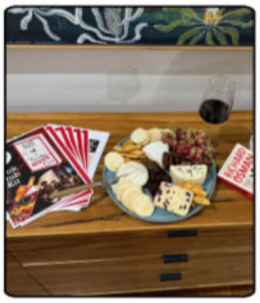
Book World
Book World
Book World

Book World Magazine is for readers who feel their way through stories. It's full of real conversations with authors, behind-the-scenes glimpses into the book world, and articles that remind you why you fell in love with reading in the first place.

We don't do stuffy or surface-level—we go deep, we go personal, and we do it with heart. Every issue is made for people who truly love books.

Book Club Guides

Book Club Guides



Our Book Club Guides are more than just a list of questions—they're thoughtfully created resources designed to make your book club sessions easier. Each guide includes discussion prompts, activity ideas, recipes, and extras that bring the book to life and help your group have fun in more memorable ways—whether you're meeting in person or online.

We do the prep so you can enjoy the conversations.

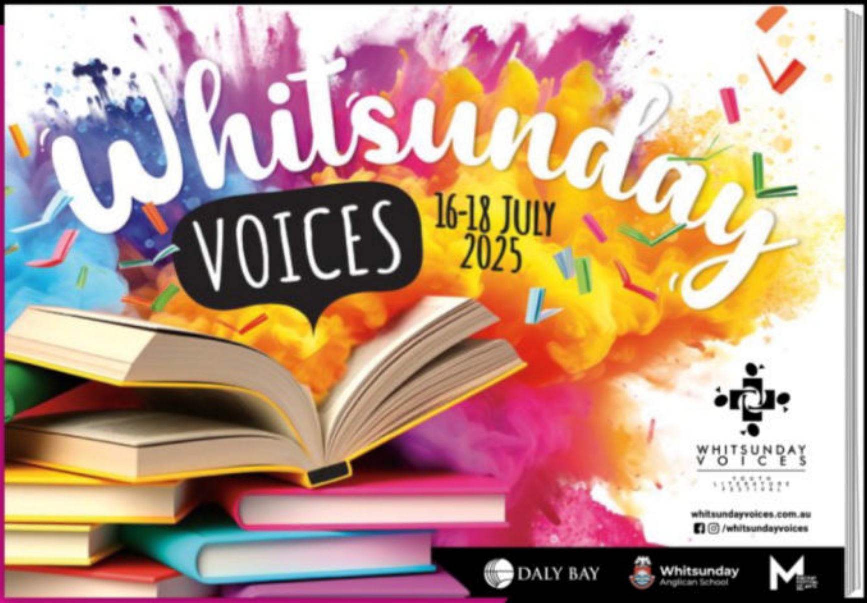
Upcoming Festivals

We're heading to some awesome festivals in the next few months. Tickets are still available. Come say hello and join us in supporting these amazing initiatives.

Whitsunday Voices Youth Literature Festival

North Queensland's largest youth literature event returns **July 16–18, 2025!** With over 80 events and 7,500+ students expected, this vibrant festival features top authors, illustrators, poets, scientists, and changemakers—including headline guest **Nedd Brockmann.** Open to schools and the general public, it's a joyful celebration of books, creativity, and and the power of storytelling.

🎟 Tickets & info:
whitsundayvoices.com.au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Whitsunday Anglican School

THE FIRST EDITION OF

CURRUMBIN CRIME WRITERS FESTIVAL

YOUR PARAGRAPH TEXT

JOIN US FOR TWO DAYS OF THRILLS AND CHILLS

I5TH-I6TH AUGUST 2025

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Currumbin Crime Writers Festival

Step into a world of intrigue at the very first Currumbin Crime Writers Festival, taking place **15–16 August 2025**.
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Currumbin 4223
Set against the stunning Gold Coast backdrop, this two-day event promises thrills, chills, and criminally good storytelling. Proudly supported by the City of Gold Coast's Arts Development Fund, the festival aims to foster creativity, connect writers, and celebrate Australia's growing appetite for crime fiction.
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FROM THE EDITORS

ISSUE 05

Dear Readers,

We've never set out to make a magazine that sticks to one genre or follows the expected path. Each issue begins with a question, a conversation, or a spark of interest and this time, it led us somewhere we didn't expect.

Issue 5 began with an email from Andrea Lewis at Storyfest, inviting us to attend Australia's biggest festival for children's literature. Neither of us has young kids at home, and we weren't quite sure where to begin. It even took some digging to find a children's bookshop to feature. But what followed turned out to be one of the most meaningful experiences we've had making this magazine.

Thanks to Andrea Lewis, we were able to meet the people shaping the next generation of readers, authors, illustrators, program founders, volunteers. Every conversation brought us back to the magic of being read to, and how those early storytelling moments stay with us long after the books are closed.

We also had the incredible opportunity to speak with U.S. author Ty Allan Jackson, whose energy, humour and grit left a lasting impression. His story is equal parts bold with lots of heart and is one we couldn't wait to share.

This issue is a tribute to that. To imagination. To legacy. To the books that shape who we are often before we even realise it.

We're proud of this one. We hope it stirs something in you: a memory, a feeling, a book you haven't thought about in years.

We've got some exciting things on the horizon—our next Book World Club retreat this August, with support from Storyfest and author Emma Grey joining us, plus the launch of our new website and online book club. But for now, we hope you'll take a moment, settle in, and enjoy these pages. It all starts here.

With love,

Lauren Illguth
&
Alana Johnson

Book World
NOT ANOTHER BORING LITERARY MAGAZINE

Kids Picks!

Keep your eyes peeled as you flip through the magazine.
You'll spot these little gems sprinkled throughout!

They're book reviews written by kids, for kids in their own awesome words.

We absolutely love them and hope you do too.
xx

Book Review

Cub's First Summer
Rebecca Elliott

Martha Penney - Age 4

Cub's First Summer
by Rebecca Elliott

Why did you choose this book?

Because I wanted to.

Why do you like it?

Because I do! I like all the water and that cub asks lots of questions just like I do.

What is your favourite character?

The favourite part is where the cub and his mum snuggle up together during the storm.

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Melbourne's Book Store for kids Only

Readings Kids

There's a little shop on Lygon Street where the magic of childhood is alive and well, and it's the cover of our Issue 5 for a reason.

Readings Kids isn't just any bookstore. It's one of the few dedicated children's bookstores in Australia, a rare gem that celebrates young readers and the authors of children's books in every way.

Walk through the doors of Readings Kids, and it's impossible not to feel the joy, the wonder, and the care that wraps around every book and every small reader who steps inside.

Since 2016, when Readings Kids opened as its own dedicated store next to Readings Carlton, manager Dani Solomon and her incredible team (including longtime storytime hosts Ellie and Lilli) have been creating something rare and important: a true home for young readers.

It's not just the shelves lined with adventures, dreams, and possibilities. It's the people. Every member of the team is a children's book specialist, passionate about putting the right story

THE BIG BACKYARD PLAN

into the right hands at exactly the right moment. They listen closely. They remember. They celebrate the shy readers, the reluctant readers, the wildly enthusiastic ones, helping every child find the book that feels like it was written just for them.

At Readings Kids, community isn't just an idea. It's stitched into everything they do. It's in the Sunday storytimes, where Ellie and Lilli dress up for weekly themed readings (and sometimes the kids arrive in costume too). It's in the moments that stay with you, like Andy Griffiths launching new Treehouse books to delighted crowds, R.A. Spratt doing the splits across the front counter, children clutching their new books with joy.

It's in their partnership with Readings Foundation, bringing bilingual storytimes and book donations to local homework groups, and in their ever-changing painted windows, turned into works of art by illustrators like Laura Stitzel, Bill Hope, Judith Rossell, and Cat Rabbit.

Readings Kids reminds us why independent bookstores matter. They are more than places to buy a book—they are places where the love of reading is planted, nurtured, and passed on.

And thanks to Dani, Ellie, Lilli, and the entire team, every laugh, every wide-eyed discovery, and every warm recommendation leaves a lasting mark—not just on the community, but on a whole new generation of readers.

Readings Kids
EVERY SUNDAY @ 10:30...
STORY TIME!
THIS WEEK'S THEME:
BUNNIES
and...
BEARS

@readingskids

Dani Soloman
Manager

Why Children's Stories Matter

Inside the Magic of Storyfest

There's a saying that echoes through the Storyfest community: it only takes one book to change a life. Maybe it's a story that helps a child feel seen for the first time. Maybe it's a book that sparks a dream of writing. Maybe it's just the simple, unforgettable memory of meeting someone who tells them: your voice matters too.

At Storyfest, the magic doesn't come from fairy lights or fireworks, although there are those too! It happens when a child shyly asks an author, "Are you famous?" Or when they clutch a brand new book to their chest, waiting for it to be signed. It happens in the wide-eyed questions hurled from school assembly floors. "Do you have a private plane?" and "Will you please dance?" The kinds of questions that make authors laugh, blush, or freeze for a second, reminders that kids don't come with filters. And that's all part of the joy, and the terror. Kids ask what adults would never dare to, and they mean every word.

Storyfest is more than a program. It's a commitment to growing readers. Every book opened, every question asked, every author met is a step toward a stronger, more literate future.

Storyfest's roots stretch back to 1994 at Somerset College on Queensland's Gold Coast. Originally launched as the Somerset Celebration of Literature, it was the vision of a handful of dedicated staff and parents who understood one simple truth: if you put an author in front of a child, you can change that child's life.

MARYAM MASTER
LAUGHTER IS THE Best ENDING

SOMERSET
Storyfest™
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It began as a local event but quickly grew, attracting schools from across the region and beyond. By 2019, Storyfest became an independent not-for-profit charity, ensuring its mission—to inspire a love of reading and writing in children—and allowing it to expand even further by reaching children from all over, not just Somerset students. Today, as proven by tickets sold, Storyfest is Australia's largest children's writers festival with a proud legacy that continues to grow.

Annually, busloads of students pour into Somerset College for three extraordinary days of books, creativity and conversation. Authors and illustrators set up in venues all across the school grounds, each hosting sessions tailored to specific age groups. Some speak about their writing journeys, others run drawing demonstrations, and many open the floor to the kind of wonderful, wild questions only kids can ask. Across Somerset's impressive campus, from amphitheatres and open-air stages to tiered halls and intimate cinema-style rooms, children gather by the hundreds, eyes wide and notebooks ready. Storyfest doesn't just give them access to Australia's best storytellers it gives them space to be curious, inspired, and completely immersed.

Storyfest
01 to 03 April
#STORYFESTGC

While Somerset College continues to generously support Storyfest with office space, infrastructure, and logistics, the festival operates as an independent charity. It relies on community donations, corporate sponsors, grants, and the incredible generosity of Somerset parents and alumni to bring stories to children. Each year, over 20 local schools are sponsored to attend the festival, with transport, sessions, and access funded entirely by community contributions. For many of these students, some of whom might otherwise have never met an author or owned a signed book, it's a rare opportunity to meet a real author, ask questions, and experience the joy of reading in a whole new way .

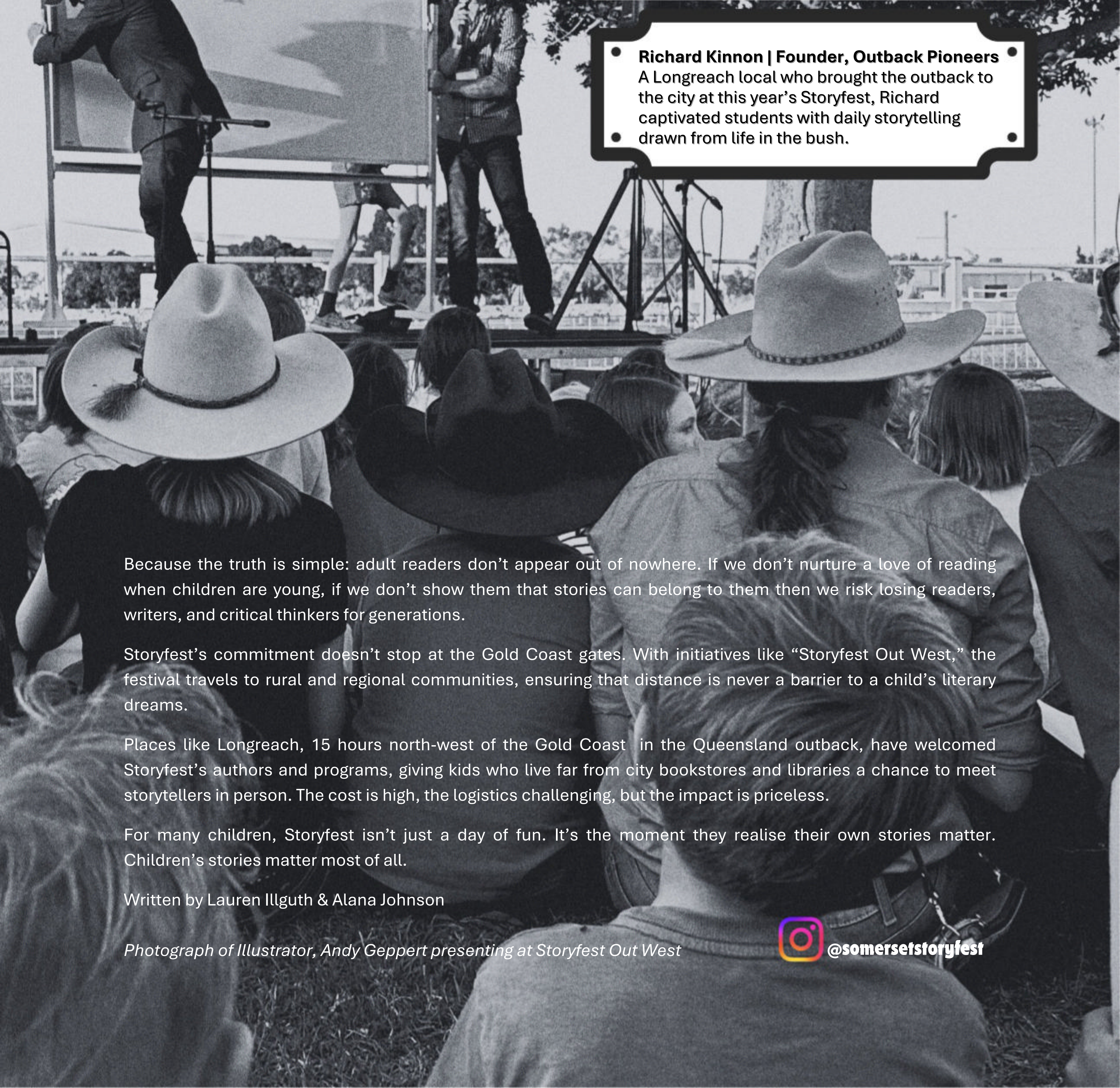
The festival itself feels like a storybook brought to life. There's a massive marquee at its centre, buzzing with children, teachers, and families. Food vans line the space while student bands and performers fill the air with music. There's a dedicated bookshop where kids can buy their favourite author's book and queue up to have it personally signed, an experience many never forget. Throughout the festival, children attend workshops with authors and illustrators, learn about story structure, character development, and visual storytelling. Everywhere you turn, something's happening. Someone's sketching, or reading, or laughing and creating. Storyfest isn't a passive event; it's an invitation to join in.

At the heart of it all is Festival Director Andrea Lewis, whose tireless leadership and deep passion along with an incredible team have shaped Storyfest into what it is today. Andrea isn't just running a festival—she's fighting for children's futures. She speaks passionately about the real-world impact of literacy: how children who don't learn to read often struggle to complete school, find employment, or build stable lives. She knows and shows that a love of reading isn't just about imagination; it's a foundation for opportunity, education, and empowerment. Together with her dedicated team, Andrea has grown Storyfest into a movement that reaches far beyond the Gold Coast, touching lives in city classrooms, remote outback communities, and everywhere in between.

For many authors, an invitation to Storyfest is more than a speaking gig. It's a badge of honor. Children's authors are some of the hardest working creators in the literary world, visiting schools, answering endless questions, and inspiring young readers who may not yet realise the power of their own voices. At Storyfest, they're not a footnote—they're the headliners.

Pictures taken at Literary Lunch and Dinner

Richard Kinnon | Founder, Outback Pioneers
A Longreach local who brought the outback to the city at this year's Storyfest, Richard captivated students with daily storytelling drawn from life in the bush.



Because the truth is simple: adult readers don't appear out of nowhere. If we don't nurture a love of reading when children are young, if we don't show them that stories can belong to them then we risk losing readers, writers, and critical thinkers for generations.

Storyfest's commitment doesn't stop at the Gold Coast gates. With initiatives like "Storyfest Out West," the festival travels to rural and regional communities, ensuring that distance is never a barrier to a child's literary dreams.

Places like Longreach, 15 hours north-west of the Gold Coast in the Queensland outback, have welcomed Storyfest's authors and programs, giving kids who live far from city bookstores and libraries a chance to meet storytellers in person. The cost is high, the logistics challenging, but the impact is priceless.

For many children, Storyfest isn't just a day of fun. It's the moment they realise their own stories matter. Children's stories matter most of all.

Written by Lauren Illguth & Alana Johnson

Photograph of Illustrator, Andy Geppert presenting at Storyfest Out West

@somersetstoryfest

Cauã Pacheco Fernandes - Age 11

Percy Jackson and the Olympians Two the Sea of Monsters,
by Rick Roden

Percy Jackson was living in his mother's hotel. His school needs his help to find a cure for a tree so he needs to go to the sea of monsters to find it

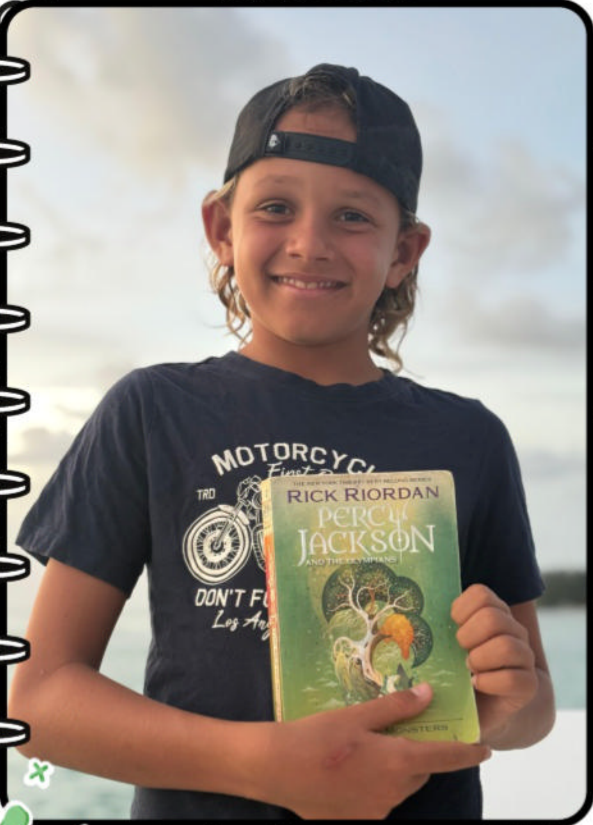
I like that book because it is very interesting and very exciting and mysterious

My favorite character is Percy

I recommend this to people who like Mystery and puzzle solving

I give four star rating to this book

4.0 ★★★★☆


RICK RIORDAN
PERCY JACKSON
AND THE OLYMPIANS
MOTORCYCL
DON'T F

Book Review

WINGS OF FIRE
TUI T. SUTHERLAND
WINGS OF FIRE
CALIFORNIA MALIBU
PIG
aliyah you'll always be my little girl

Aaliyah age 9

Wings of Fire the Hidden Kingdom - Book 3
by Tui T. Sutherland

I like these books because it had dragons in them. It's easy to read and comes in comic form.

I like Glory - she's my favourite. She's brave and knows what needs to be done but sometimes annoying (mum said Persistent.

I like the art on the cover. I like book 3 better. I got to know more about glory and the other dragons. Glory is royalty. I think other kids that like dragons would like these books because I do.

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WHERE THE WINE MEETS THE WORDS

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29th – 31st August 2025

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STANTHORPE

Connect Over Wine & Words

Meet fellow readers over great food, better wine, and unforgettable chats. This retreat is all about real conversations and new friendships.

Special Guest Emma Grey

Join bestselling author of *Pictures of You and The Last Love Note,* Emma Grey for an intimate weekend of storytelling and discussion.

PICTURES OF YOU
EMMA GREY
Book World
Book World

Slow Mornings & Bookish Delights

Slow down with good books, rich reds, and the crackle of a fire.
We've booked the entire estate, so it's just us, stories, and the warmth of shared moments.

Join Us!

A LUXURIOUS RETREAT FOR BOOK LOVERS

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$1,200
Per Person Twin Share

STAY

Vineyard Chalet - Yours or Shared

Each cosy twin-share chalet is yours to enjoy solo or with a friend.
Book with someone you know, or make it your personal escape.
Private decks, heating, vineyard views, and nothing but stillness outside your door.

Evening Book Club by the Fire

Gather with fellow readers for an exclusive fireside chat with Emma Grey. Ask questions, share reflections, and enjoy that unbeatable wine-and-book glow.

Included is dinner both Friday and Saturday nights plus daily breakfasts –
Fresh and locally sourced.

Enjoy a Long Lunch

Private tasting + vineyard tour

BALANCING HEART
VINEYARD

Our long lunch at Balancing Heart Winery is the centrepiece of the weekend: a fresh, local feast paired with signature wines, laughter, and good conversation.

The Art of Doing Nothing

Take a walk. Pour a glass. Dive into your book. Nap. Repeat. This weekend is designed for rest and rhythm—where every moment invites you to slow down and savour it.

Curated gift bag.
Thoughtful keepsakes from the retreat.
A bottle of wine from Ridgemill Estate.

BOOK WORLD CLUB

BUILT DIFFERENT
Ty Allan
JACKSON

READ
OR ELSE

Ty Isn't Waiting for Anyone

By Lauren Illguth

“When you’re born in the Bronx, you’re built different.” That’s how Ty Allan Jackson explained it—not with arrogance, but with clarity. Because in his world, success wasn’t guaranteed, and certainly not handed over. His mother became a single mum at 15 and earned her master’s degree by 30. She was a living example of what it means to persevere, believe in yourself and chase more. That mindset would become his compass.

Ty never set out to be a writer. He wasn’t an English major. He never even went to college. But when his eight-year-old son asked, “Dad, can we open up a lemonade stand?” ...everything changed. After his son made $50 in one afternoon, Ty went searching for a kids’ book that could explain what to do with it and how to manage it. He couldn’t find one. So he wrote it himself. That book was rejected 147 times. Most people would’ve stopped there. Ty didn’t.

He created Big Head Books, not because he set out to be a publisher, but because no one else was willing to publish the stories he knew mattered. Over the years, Ty has written a collection of books that reflect his mission to educate, empower, and entertain. His debut, *Danny Dollar Millionaire Extraordinaire*, introduces young readers to financial literacy in a fun and accessible way. He followed it up with *Make Your Own Money,* a practical guide for kids to earn, save, and spend wisely. But Ty's storytelling doesn't stop at money. In *The Supadupa Kid* series, he gives readers an action-packed superhero adventure with a young black protagonist at the centre. In *When I Close My Eyes*, he celebrates imagination, while *You Are Amazing / I Am Amazing* is a dual-perspective picture book designed to boost self-esteem. Each title is different, but the message is consistent: you are powerful, and you matter.

These are stories about confidence, success, and kids who rarely saw themselves in the books they read. Ty wanted children who shared his background to feel seen on the covers, in the pages, and at the centre of power.

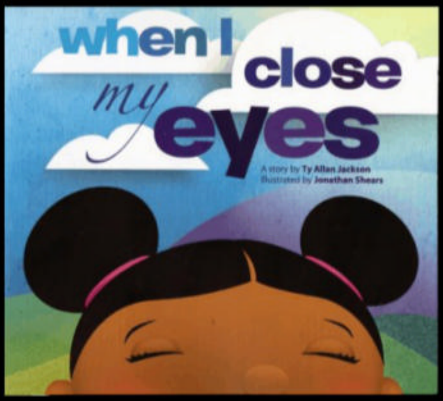
DANNY DOLLAR
MILLIONAIRE
EXTRAORDINAIRE
THE LEMONADE ESCAPADE
MAKE YOUR OWN MONEY
HOW KIDS CAN
EARN IT
SAVE IT
SPEND IT
AND DREAM BIG
DANNY DOLLAR
TY ALLAN JACKSON
THE KING OF CHA-CHING
THE SUPADUPA KID
TY ALLAN JACKSON
THE SUPADUPA KID 2
MOVE
TY ALLAN JACKSON

Over the years, Ty has sold over 300,000 books—without the backing of a major publisher. He's built a national reputation for getting kids excited about reading; not by lecturing them, but by making them laugh. His school presentation, **The 5 Reasons Why You Should Read,** is part stand-up comedy, part motivational talk, and all heart. He speaks their language, because he listens first.

His impact goes far beyond the page. One boy, after seeing Ty speak, tugged on his shirt and said, "I hated reading… and then I read your book. And now I love it." That moment lives in Ty's mind. Because he knows that one book, for one kid, can change everything. He also knows how that kind of transformation echoes through families, generations, and entire communities.

One of the most visible moments of recognition for Ty's work came when he was featured on Disney+ in *Marvel's Hero Project.* The episode spotlighted Sidney Keys III, a young boy who had been inspired by *Danny Dollar* to start a book club for boys. In the segment, Ty personally surprised Sidney with his superhero gear, a moment that deeply moved him. Being part of a series that honored real-life changemakers was more than just a career milestone—it was a public acknowledgment of how far Ty's books had travelled, and how deeply they resonated. For Ty, it wasn't about being on television. It was about witnessing the ripple effect of one story, one reader, one moment at a time.

His own family has been part of the journey every step of the way. Ty has three kids, and he says what makes them proud isn't the books, or even the accolades. It's that they watched their dad go from long, exhausting days working corporate sales tired, spent, and grinding, to someone who bet on himself. Someone who created a career from nothing. Someone who found joy, purpose, and made it contagious. They saw him change his own life, and in doing so, gave them permission to chase their own joy.


when I close my eyes
A story by Ty Allan Jackson
Illustrated by Jonathan Shears

And it's not just his kids he's trying to reach. Through his **Danny Dollar Academy,** Ty teaches financial literacy to school students in a way that actually sticks. The lessons are practical, empowering, and accessible, because he knows children don't need watered-down messaging. They need honesty, tools, and belief. "We don't speak down to kids," he told us. "We speak up to them."

When we met Ty, he was everything we hoped: magnetic, passionate, energised. He lit up when he spoke about his mission, his family, his readers. And even after all he's achieved, from building his own publishing company to national literacy tours, it's clear he hasn't even scratched the surface of what he wants to do.

@ty_allan_jackson
READ
OR ELSE

The Campaign Turning Pages — and Lives

In a world where illiteracy is linked to poverty, incarceration, and limited opportunity, **Read or Else** is a bold call to action. Co-founded by American author and literacy advocate Ty Allan Jackson and his brother Eddie Taylor, the campaign is built on one powerful truth: reading changes everything.

Read or Else began after the brothers ran a program for incarcerated parents, teaching them the importance of literacy and how they could encourage a love of reading in their children. What started in a prison classroom grew into a national initiative with a clear message. If we want to change the future, we have to get serious about reading.

But this isn't just a slogan on a T-shirt although the T-shirts are part of it. For every **Read or Else** shirt or hoodie sold, Ty and Eddie donate a copy of *Danny Dollar Millionaire Extraordinaire*—Ty's bestselling book about financial literacy—to a child in a Title 1 school or in a homeless shelter.

At its heart, **Read or Else** is about access. It's about putting powerful stories into kids' hands and showing them what's possible. It's grassroots, direct, and deeply personal. And with every book given, every child reached, and every message shared, it's rewriting what literacy looks like, one reader at a time.

To learn more or support the campaign: https://tyallanjackson.com/read-or-else

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OR ELSE

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We read all kinds of books, with all kinds of people.
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What's included:

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✦ A surprise in the post before each session
✦ A private space to chat books all year round
✦ $120/year - no lock-in, no fluff

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A Dog, A Book, A Story with Story Dogs

Fun Reading 🐾 Reading for Life

Fun Reading

Story Dogs

We are proud Sponsors
of a Story Dog.

Reading for Life

In 2009, Janine Sigley wasn't setting out to build a national charity. She was just a mum searching online for a way her 10-year-old daughter could volunteer with animals. What she stumbled upon an American program where kids read aloud to dogs sparked an idea that would change thousands of young lives across Australia.

Together with her friend Leah, Janine brought that spark to life. They started Story Dogs from scratch, trialling the idea in their children's local primary school. "The principal thought we were a bit crazy," Janine laughs. "But after one term, the teachers were asking for more dogs."

Story Dogs

Fun Reading 🐾 Reading for Life

Today, over 560 dog-and-volunteer teams quietly sit with children across more than 400 Australian schools. Each week, around 3,000 students read to a dog in a non-judgmental, calming environment. These aren't therapy dogs—they're simply gentle, accredited pets whose presence transforms reading from something stressful into something joyful.

@storydogs.org.au

For many children, it's the first time they've seen a book as a friend instead of a fear. "We work mostly with kids who don't have books at home, who don't get read to," Janine explains. "Some don't even speak at school. But with the dog beside them, they open up."

The change isn't just in the children. Volunteers, often retirees or people looking to get involved and find a deep sense of purpose. "We have volunteers who plan their next dog around Story Dogs, so they never miss their weekly visit," says Janine.

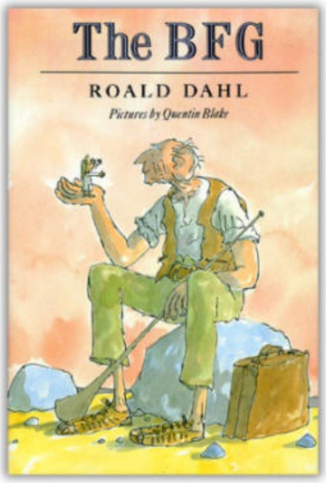
Story Dogs runs entirely on community spirit. Local businesses, clubs, and individuals can sponsor a dog for just $550 annually, funding that puts smiles on faces and books into small hands. Right now, 63 dogs are still waiting for sponsors.

Because sometimes, the simplest ideas like reading to a dog turn, out to be the ones that leave the biggest paw prints.

WHERE THE love OF READING BEGINS

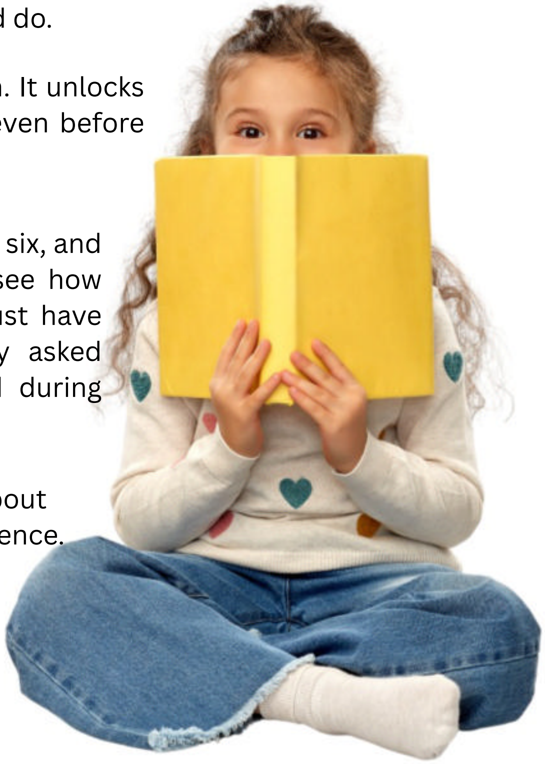
by Lauren Illguth

RICK RIORDAN
PERCY JACKSON



I remember the first time I read The BFG by Roald Dahl. I was completely swept away by the giants—friendly ones and mean ones—and those made-up, musical-sounding words that were strange and thrilling and a little bit tricky to figure out. But that was the joy of it. It sparked something in me: curiosity, wonder, imagination. It made me want to keep going, to keep reading, to keep exploring what else stories could do.

That's what reading does for children. It unlocks a world of possibility. And it starts even before they can read for themselves.



When I was a prep teacher, I taught kids between the ages of five and six, and even as young as three. Every day in the classroom, you could see how books shaped kids. The ones who were read to regularly didn't just have more vocabulary—they had stories bubbling out of them. They asked questions. They stretched their imagination. They sat wide-eyed during group reading time, hanging on every word. You could see that spark.

Reading to children isn't just about helping them learn to read. It's about building confidence, curiosity, imagination, and even emotional resilience. It's sitting still on the couch or snuggling in bed and sharing something together—a silly voice, a big question, a quiet moment. It becomes part of their routine, part of how they understand the world, and part of how they begin to understand themselves.

Research backs this up. A study in 2019 led by Jessica Logan at The Ohio State University found that children who are read just one picture book a day are exposed to around 78,000 words a year. Over five years, that's 1.4 million more words than children who aren't regularly read to. Those extra words and stories don't just build vocabulary, they shape how kids think, express themselves, and make sense of the world.

Reading also helps children understand feelings and build empathy. Fiction allows them to experience different lives, different perspectives, different struggles. It gives them the language not just to describe what they feel—but to imagine what others feel, too. There's growing research that shows how reading fiction, even from a young age, plays a powerful role in developing emotional intelligence and empathy.

One of my friends recently read a book her son was reading, not because she was interested in the story, but because she wanted to connect with what he was into. And something happened. Their conversations expanded. They found themselves talking about themes, characters, emotions. Reading gave them more to share.

It doesn't have to be complicated. It isn't about guilt or pressure. It's about choosing something simple and meaningful. Reading one book together. Making it a ritual. Swapping a toy for a picture book. Asking your child what they're reading, and telling them what you loved to read when you were their age.

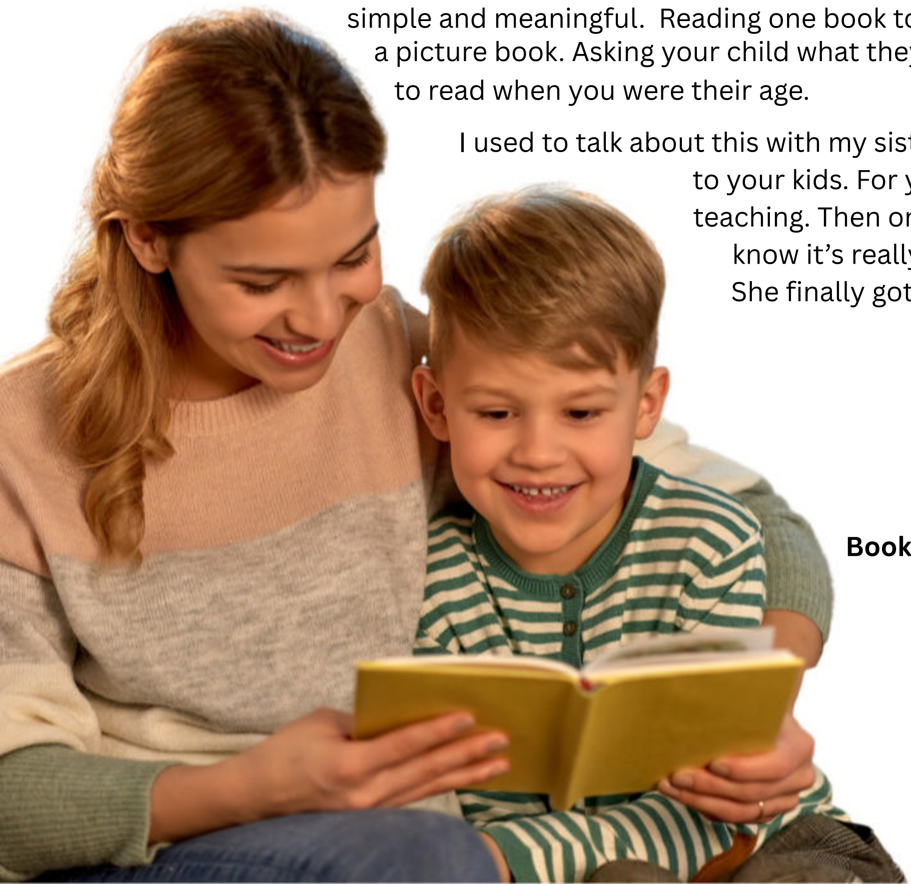
I used to talk about this with my sister all the time, how important it was to read to your kids. For years, I'd tell her everything I'd learned from teaching. Then one day she read an article and said, "Did you know it's really important to read to your kids?" I laughed. She finally got it. Sometimes it takes hearing it from somewhere else to really feel it.

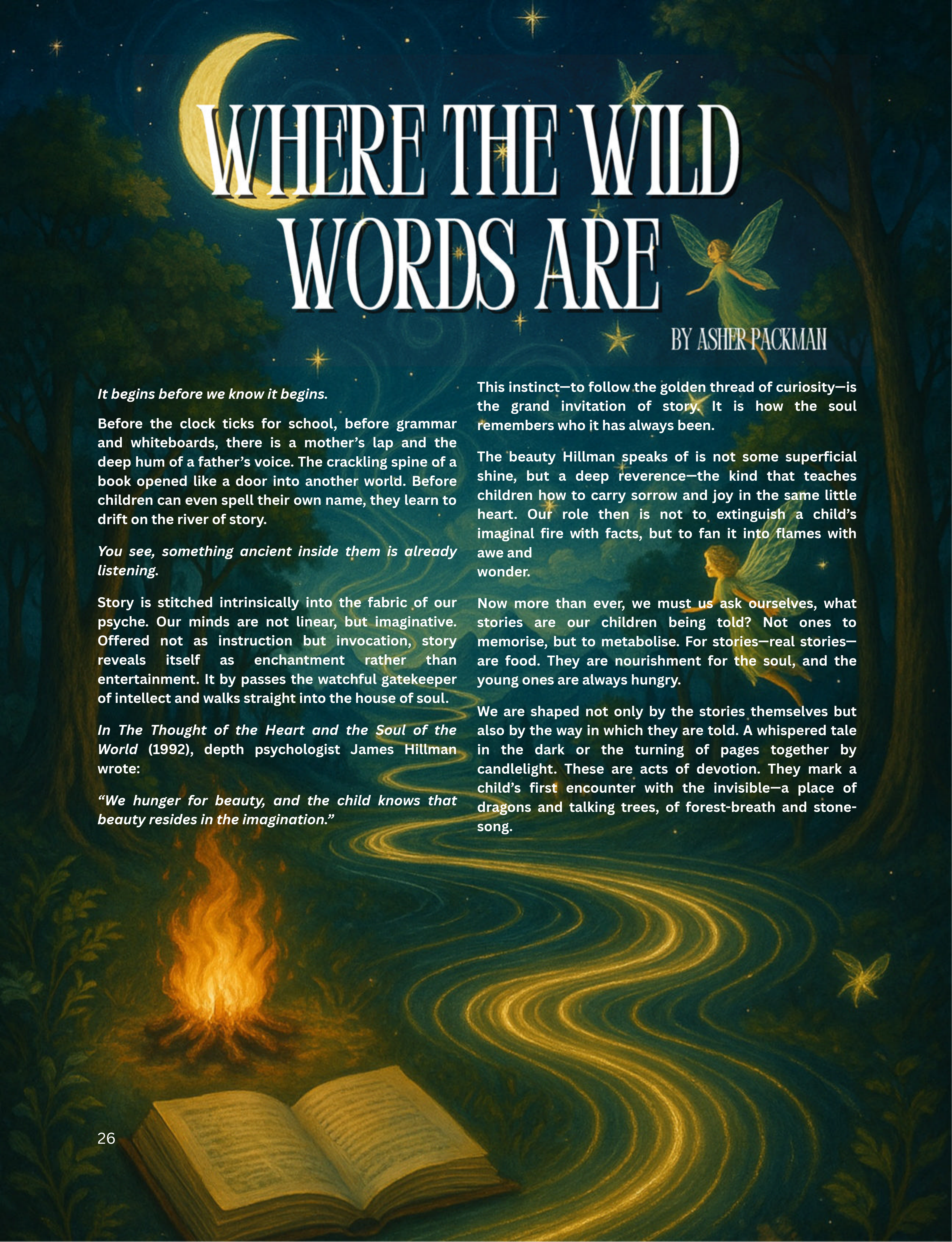
Because here's what I've learned

Readers aren't born—they're made.

Books don't just build brains—they build futures.

And a child who falls in love with reading won't just do better in school, they'll carry that love with them wherever they go.





WHERE THE WILD WORDS ARE

BY ASHER PACKMAN

It begins before we know it begins.

Before the clock ticks for school, before grammar and whiteboards, there is a mother's lap and the deep hum of a father's voice. The crackling spine of a book opened like a door into another world. Before children can even spell their own name, they learn to drift on the river of story.

You see, something ancient inside them is already listening.

Story is stitched intrinsically into the fabric of our psyche. Our minds are not linear, but imaginative. Offered not as instruction but invocation, story reveals itself as enchantment rather than entertainment. It by passes the watchful gatekeeper of intellect and walks straight into the house of soul.

In The Thought of the Heart and the Soul of the World (1992), depth psychologist James Hillman wrote:

"We hunger for beauty, and the child knows that beauty resides in the imagination."

This instinct—to follow the golden thread of curiosity—is the grand invitation of story. It is how the soul remembers who it has always been.

The beauty Hillman speaks of is not some superficial shine, but a deep reverence—the kind that teaches children how to carry sorrow and joy in the same little heart. Our role then is not to extinguish a child's imaginal fire with facts, but to fan it into flames with awe and wonder.

Now more than ever, we must us ask ourselves, what stories are our children being told? Not ones to memorise, but to metabolise. For stories—real stories—are food. They are nourishment for the soul, and the young ones are always hungry.

We are shaped not only by the stories themselves but also by the way in which they are told. A whispered tale in the dark or the turning of pages together by candlelight. These are acts of devotion. They mark a child's first encounter with the invisible—a place of dragons and talking trees, of forest-breath and stone-song.

@asherpackman

Something inside me aches a little when I see a child being handed a tablet instead of a tale. As if all the world's shimmering magic could be compressed into pixels. These short grabs for attention are just shattered stories, glass shards offering only distorted reflections—a hall of broken mirrors. For there is no algorithm which can invoke the hush that falls when a storyteller begins: "*Once upon a time…*".

These words are a spell that break the bonds of linear time and enter us into the eternal.

Once under a time. Once inside a time.

To tell a story to a child is not to prepare them for school; it is to awaken them to the very act of life. It is slow, attentive, tender—a kind of sanctuary. A weaving together of breath and presence. When a child leans in close to listen, what they are doing is opening. They are saying, I trust you to guide me into the unknown.

Mythologist Michael Meade has observed that children often linger at the edge of scary parts in a story, wanting to hear it again. What they're really asking is, "*do you feel this too?*" In that moment, the story becomes more than mere words—it becomes a soul agreement. The child is not looking to be rescued from fear, but simply to know they are not alone in it. When we meet them there—without rushing past the shadows—we are saying, "*Yes, I know this place.*"

Myth is what never was, but always is.

In ancient times, elders were storytellers. They knew that myth was medicine, that to offer a tale was to offer an unbroken mirror to the soul. Children, still close to the veil between worlds—akin to the elders at the other end of life—understand this innately. They do not question why animals talk or how the moon can be a mother. They listen with the same ears they use for dreaming.

And in that listening, something essential is passed down. Not just a plot, but an inside-out, more-than-ordinary wisdom. Telling a story—truly, with heart—is entering that space together, adult and child, and both returning changed.

I remember the timbre of my mother's voice as she read *The Velveteen Rabbit* to me—how realness, according to the Skin Horse, was something that happened when you were truly loved, even if your fur had been rubbed off. I didn't know then that it was a story about the soul. **I only knew that somehow it mattered.**

Decades later, I read it to my own son. I saw his eyes widen. I felt that familiar hush. And it was then I understood—this is how we begin to love stories. Not through obligation, but through initiation. Through the mystery of somehow implicitly understanding that "*this story is for me*".

So, let us tell stories to our children—not to teach them how the world works, but to show them that it is still enchanted. Let us bring them the old myths, the strange fairy tales, the rhymes and riddles and poems that smell of wood smoke and shine like stars. Let us speak to the ancient mythic creatures curled up snugly inside their hearts.

For the stories we give them are the maps they'll carry into the forest of their own unconscious—and gods willing, they'll remember which way the wild things went.

Earphones Award
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EXCEPTIONAL AUDIO PERFORMANCE

Inside the Booth with

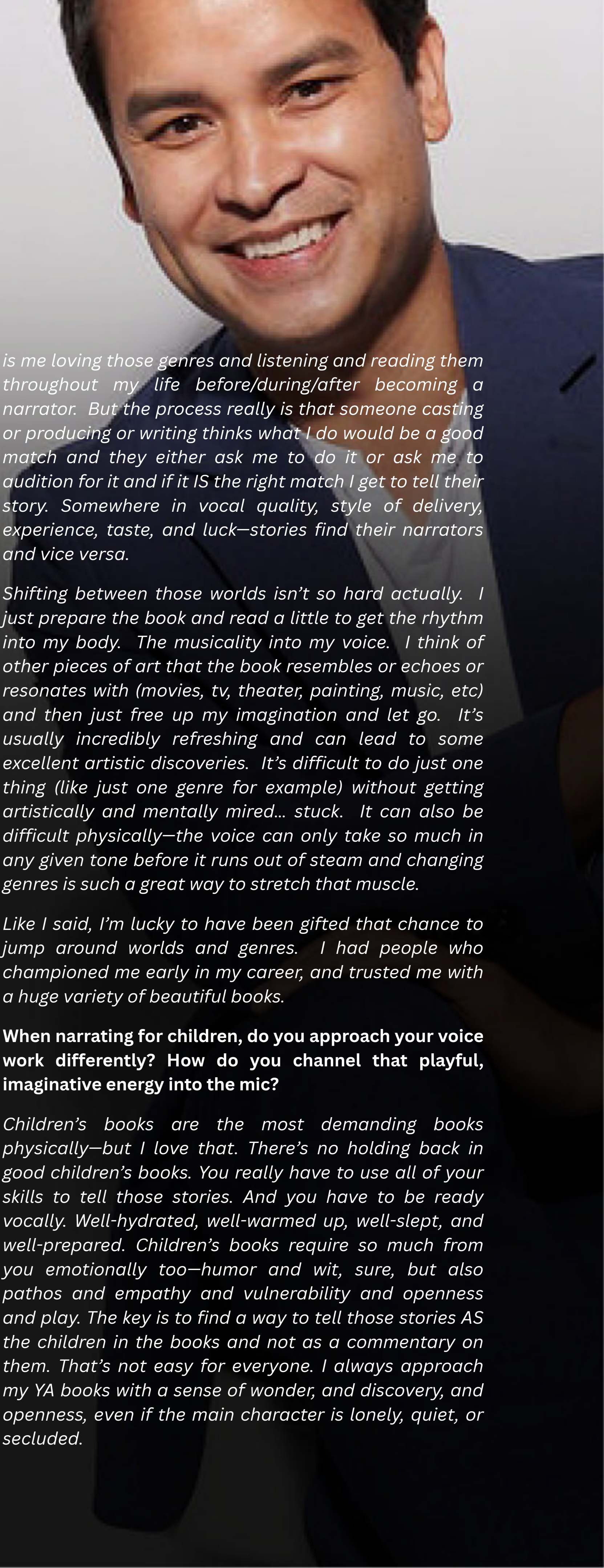
RAMON DE OCAMPO

If your child has ever laughed along to *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*, chances are they've already spent hours with Ramón de Ocampo and may not even know it.

With a voice that's become part of the childhood experience for so many young listeners, Ramón has helped bring some of the most beloved stories to life through audiobooks. But his work goes far beyond that. A trained actor with over 500 audiobooks to his name, he's also starred on screen and stage, voiced everything from heartfelt fiction to out-of-this-world adventures, and is a true original in the world of narration starting back in the days of cassette tapes held in clamshells. Somehow, he's also remained completely ageless while doing it all.

In this fun and thoughtful Q&A, Ramón shares what it's like to perform for children, raise young listeners of his own, and be part of the generation that shaped audiobooks into what they are today.

Audie Awards
Audio Publishers Association
APA



You've been narrating since the clamshell tape days—before audiobooks were even digital. What do you remember most about that era of narration?

Paper? Hahaha. It's true though. Right now narration reading is done off an iPad. The way it used to happen was the narrator would spread pages across a table and a music stand. A stack of unread pages to the right of the stand, two on the stand, and a discard pile on the left. As you would inevitably make a mistake in the narration you would shuffle a page off the stand and grab a new one and move them all down. Afterward we would take the "read stack" and flip them over to use when we did corrections a few weeks later. Sometimes when you were pressed for time you couldn't be bothered neatly stacking and you'd just toss papers over your shoulder and deal with it later. I remember bringing my first iPad into the office of Bob Deyan (of Deyan Audio) like it was some new magical device (because it was) and suggesting we did things without paper. I'm not saying I changed the industry or anything—but Bob loved gadgets as much as I do, and he went and bought iPads for every booth in the studio right after.

The other thing I remember, and it's more important than paper, is that audiobook narration was always a collaboration. There was always a director, and often a separate engineer along with the narrator working on the book at the same time. Microphones, outboard audio equipment, programs, computers, recording studios—all of that stuff was too expensive to have at home so you'd always have a studio to go to… and there was always a community in that studio. The audiobook world is pretty close still, but almost all of our work is now done alone in home studios, which is a miracle of innovation and I love it… but I definitely miss the days when all the narrators and engineers would stop for a group lunch and we'd barbecue for an hour and connect before everyone got back into their booths. Made a lot of life friends that way. Met my wife that way, actually.

You've narrated everything from children's stories to sci-fi, thrillers, and literary fiction. What draws you to such a wide range of work—and how do you shift between those worlds?

I've been super lucky to have had a career that allows me that sort of breadth for sure, and part of that comes from having so much experience and time in the job—eventually you hit all the bases. But honestly, it's not me picking the books… there's a bit of alchemy in it. I'm sure that part of that alchemy is me loving those genres and listening and reading them throughout my life before/during/after becoming a narrator. But the process really is that someone casting or producing or writing thinks what I do would be a good match and they either ask me to do it or ask me to audition for it and if it IS the right match I get to tell their story. Somewhere in vocal quality, style of delivery, experience, taste, and luck—stories find their narrators and vice versa.

Shifting between those worlds isn't so hard actually. I just prepare the book and read a little to get the rhythm into my body. The musicality into my voice. I think of other pieces of art that the book resembles or echoes or resonates with (movies, tv, theater, painting, music, etc) and then just free up my imagination and let go. It's usually incredibly refreshing and can lead to some excellent artistic discoveries. It's difficult to do just one thing (like just one genre for example) without getting artistically and mentally mired… stuck. It can also be difficult physically—the voice can only take so much in any given tone before it runs out of steam and changing genres is such a great way to stretch that muscle.

Like I said, I'm lucky to have been gifted that chance to jump around worlds and genres. I had people who championed me early in my career, and trusted me with a huge variety of beautiful books.

When narrating for children, do you approach your voice work differently? How do you channel that playful, imaginative energy into the mic?

Children's books are the most demanding books physically—but I love that. There's no holding back in good children's books. You really have to use all of your skills to tell those stories. And you have to be ready vocally. Well-hydrated, well-warmed up, well-slept, and well-prepared. Children's books require so much from you emotionally too—humor and wit, sure, but also pathos and empathy and vulnerability and openness and play. The key is to find a way to tell those stories AS the children in the books and not as a commentary on them. That's not easy for everyone. I always approach my YA books with a sense of wonder, and discovery, and openness, even if the main character is lonely, quiet, or secluded.

You're the voice behind *Diary of a Wimpy Kid,* the U.S. series loved by kids around the world. What's it like to bring such a globally popular character to life?

It's been 20 years. I can't believe that. When the first book came to us (Recorded books Inc, the audio publishers, and my champion Claudia Howard asked me to narrate), none of us (probably not even Jeff Kinney, the author,) knew what we had or the kind of impact it was going to have on the world. There are already re-releases and re-recordings (with full sound effects) that are out now that I'm doing… but if you listen to the early books, a lot of the cartoon narration is me improvising in the booth and sending pitches of the jokes I think would make the cartoons come alive. The new editions are more ironed out and excellent for sure, but I remember crafting that cadence and personality and sense of humor in front of that mic.

I love meeting kids who are big fans, and I love meeting parents whose kids listen to me—I can often get those parents a get out of jail card by sending their kids video messages in "the voice". I started a Cameo because I had gotten so many requests at one point. But I love it. Love it a ton.

DIARY
of a
Wimpy Kid
NO BRAINER
OVER 275 MILLION BOOKS SOLD
Jeff Kinney

Do your own kids listen to your work, or are you just "Dad" to them? What's it like having children who are growing up in a world where their father is the voice in their books?

You know those "Tonies" box toys? There's a figure that goes on essentially a soft blue tooth speaker and they sing and things? There's actually a Greg Heffley figure and it plays the whole first Wimpy Kid book with me reading. My kids fight over that sometimes.

They're a bit young really (one and four) to get it… but they will. There's no hiding Greg Heffley from middle schoolers, and pretty soon they'll know… dad's a badass. Haha. Or at least dad's a wimpy kid.

Not just me though… have to say my wife, Lauren J Irwin is actually the voice of the Peppa Pig Audiobook series… so we're like the first couple of YA literature narrators.

You've had major roles on screen (*The West Wing, Dynasty, 12 Monkeys*) and on stage, including an award-winning *Hamlet*. How has your acting background influenced the way you tell stories through voice?

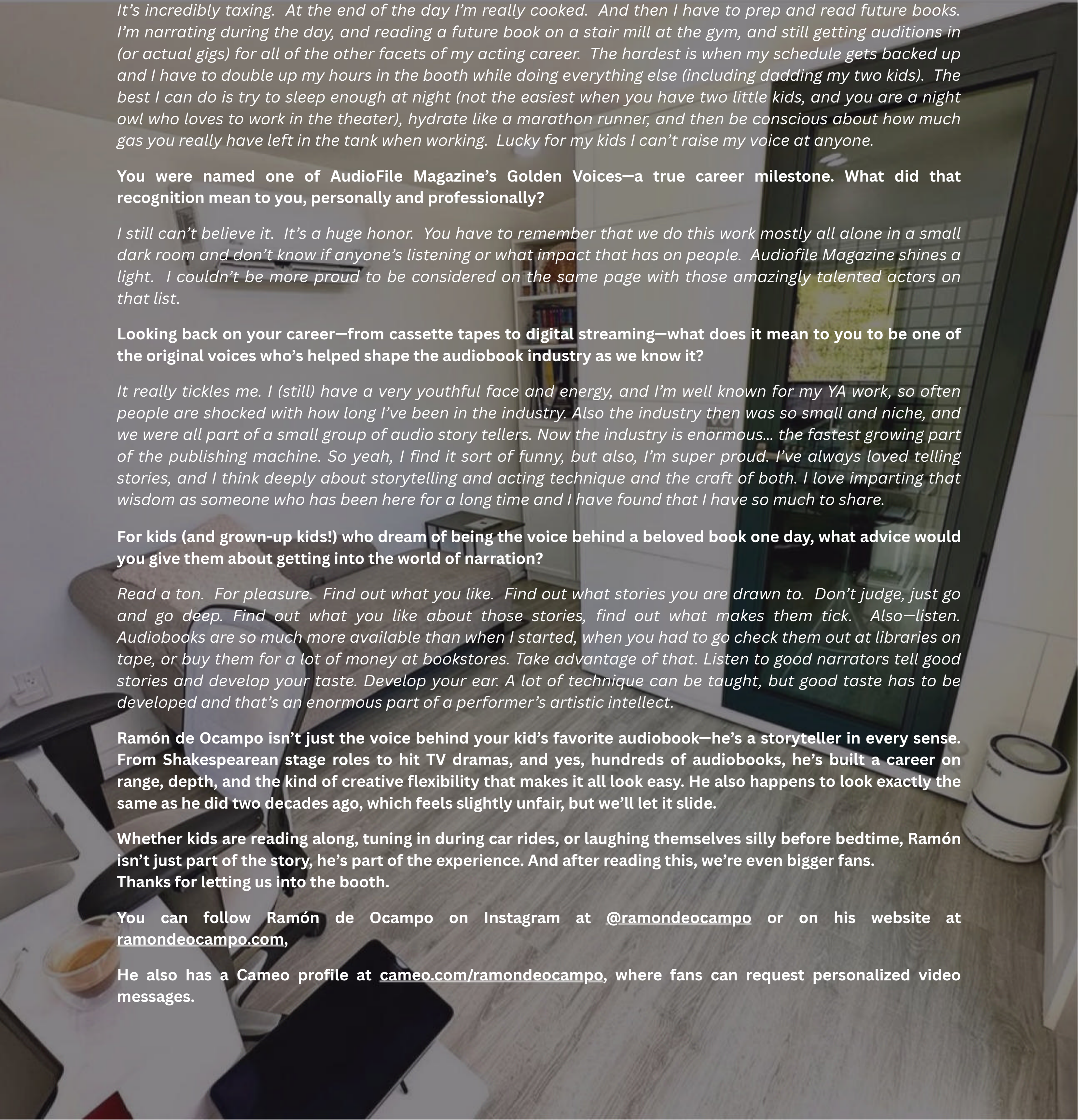
I actually see narration as just one of the facets of my acting career. I'm an actor that narrates books as one part of a varied acting diet. Book narration is 100% acting—especially theater and classical acting. This job requires real technique, especially for the longer novels. My acting training has been invaluable. You not only have to have good vocal technique (which is sort of a given), but you have to be able to quickly and immediately identify story points, beats, characters, relationships, overarching themes, literary references—the script analysis part of your brain has to be sharp… and then you have to be facile enough to quickly physically act on those ideas and keep going. Nothing is as physically and mentally taxing in the acting world than long-form narration.

I also tend to think of books I'm reading in terms that make more sense in visual acting mediums. I'll often think of my narration as "wide shots" or "close ups" or "quick cuts" or a "walk and talk" or a "POV"—terms that come from film… and I'll think of text in terms of theater scripts—beats, objectives, obstacles, relationships, super-objectives, cast list, that sort of thing.

You've narrated over 350 audiobooks. Is there one that left an unexpected emotional impact on you—either in its message or in the process of performing it?

Actually it's over 500. I think there are about 420 or so that are digitized, but there are so so many that never got the digital treatment, and some that have gone up and been removed (it's a rights holder thing). There have been so many times that I've been moved narrating. It wasn't uncommon when I was younger and was always in *a booth with an engineer and director listening. We'd have to take a break because we were misty eyed from a passage, or laughing so hard we couldn't record anymore. I miss those times. I remember really connecting to Jonathan Troppers "This is Where I Leave You"... something about the honesty and loneliness and humor and a big big heart resonated with me. We stopped recording a few times on that one just to reflect and enjoy and soak it up.*

Many listeners don't realize the stamina narration requires. What's your routine when preparing for a long recording session?



It's incredibly taxing. At the end of the day I'm really cooked. And then I have to prep and read future books. I'm narrating during the day, and reading a future book on a stair mill at the gym, and still getting auditions in (or actual gigs) for all of the other facets of my acting career. The hardest is when my schedule gets backed up and I have to double up my hours in the booth while doing everything else (including dadding my two kids). The best I can do is try to sleep enough at night (not the easiest when you have two little kids, and you are a night owl who loves to work in the theater), hydrate like a marathon runner, and then be conscious about how much gas you really have left in the tank when working. Lucky for my kids I can't raise my voice at anyone.

You were named one of AudioFile Magazine's Golden Voices—a true career milestone. What did that recognition mean to you, personally and professionally?

I still can't believe it. It's a huge honor. You have to remember that we do this work mostly all alone in a small dark room and don't know if anyone's listening or what impact that has on people. Audiofile Magazine shines a light. I couldn't be more proud to be considered on the same page with those amazingly talented actors on that list.

Looking back on your career—from cassette tapes to digital streaming—what does it mean to you to be one of the original voices who's helped shape the audiobook industry as we know it?

It really tickles me. I (still) have a very youthful face and energy, and I'm well known for my YA work, so often people are shocked with how long I've been in the industry. Also the industry then was so small and niche, and we were all part of a small group of audio story tellers. Now the industry is enormous... the fastest growing part of the publishing machine. So yeah, I find it sort of funny, but also, I'm super proud. I've always loved telling stories, and I think deeply about storytelling and acting technique and the craft of both. I love imparting that wisdom as someone who has been here for a long time and I have found that I have so much to share.

For kids (and grown-up kids!) who dream of being the voice behind a beloved book one day, what advice would you give them about getting into the world of narration?

Read a ton. For pleasure. Find out what you like. Find out what stories you are drawn to. Don't judge, just go and go deep. Find out what you like about those stories, find out what makes them tick. Also—listen. Audiobooks are so much more available than when I started, when you had to go check them out at libraries on tape, or buy them for a lot of money at bookstores. Take advantage of that. Listen to good narrators tell good stories and develop your taste. Develop your ear. A lot of technique can be taught, but good taste has to be developed and that's an enormous part of a performer's artistic intellect.

Ramón de Ocampo isn't just the voice behind your kid's favorite audiobook—he's a storyteller in every sense. From Shakespearean stage roles to hit TV dramas, and yes, hundreds of audiobooks, he's built a career on range, depth, and the kind of creative flexibility that makes it all look easy. He also happens to look exactly the same as he did two decades ago, which feels slightly unfair, but we'll let it slide.

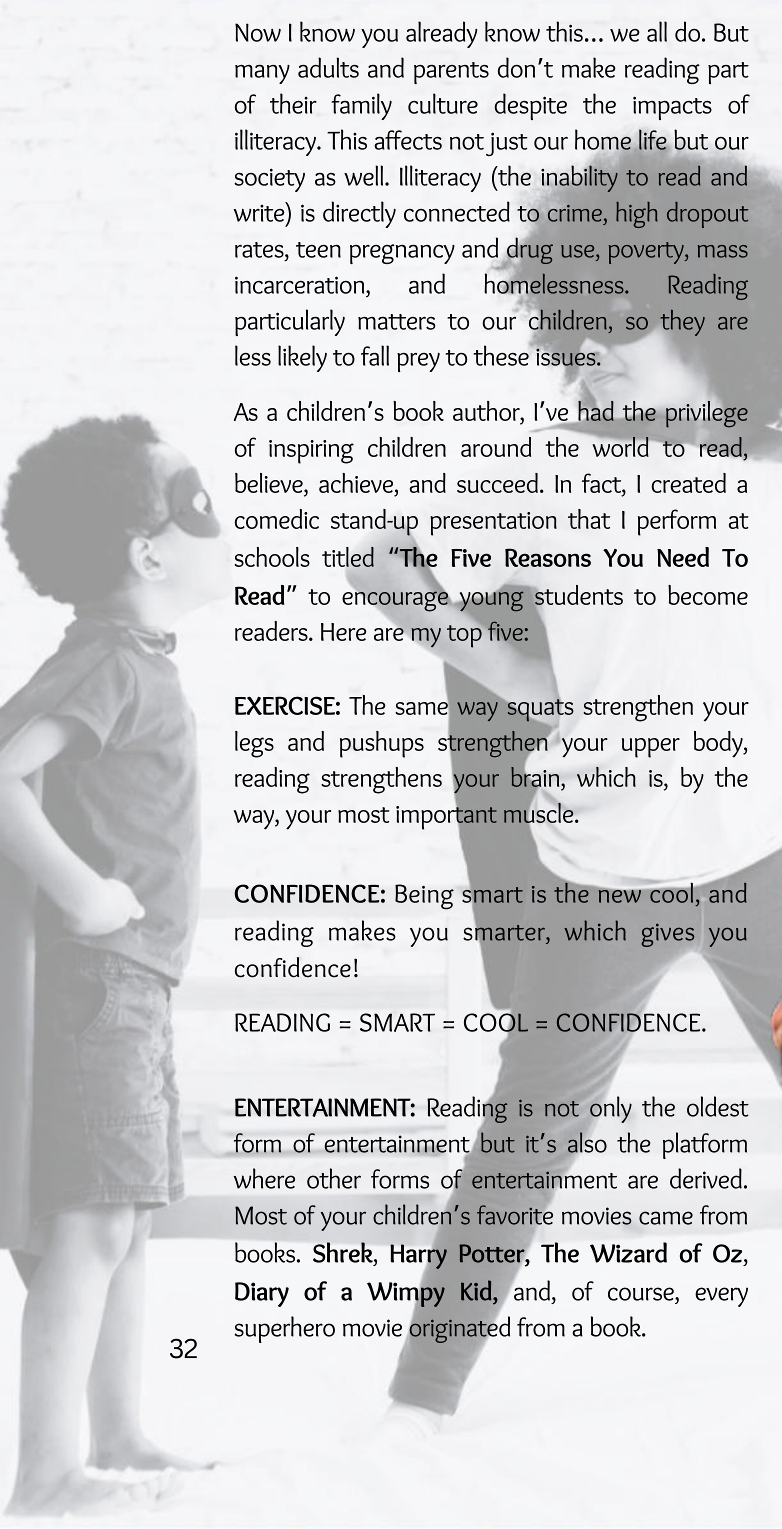
**Whether kids are reading along, tuning in during car rides, or laughing themselves silly before bedtime, Ramón isn't just part of the story, he's part of the experience. And after reading this, we're even bigger fans.
Thanks for letting us into the booth.**

You can follow Ramón de Ocampo on Instagram at @ramondeocampo or on his website at ramondeocampo.com,

He also has a Cameo profile at cameo.com/ramondeocampo, where fans can request personalized video messages.

READING MATTERS

By Ty Allen Jackson



Now I know you already know this… we all do. But many adults and parents don't make reading part of their family culture despite the impacts of illiteracy. This affects not just our home life but our society as well. Illiteracy (the inability to read and write) is directly connected to crime, high dropout rates, teen pregnancy and drug use, poverty, mass incarceration, and homelessness. Reading particularly matters to our children, so they are less likely to fall prey to these issues.

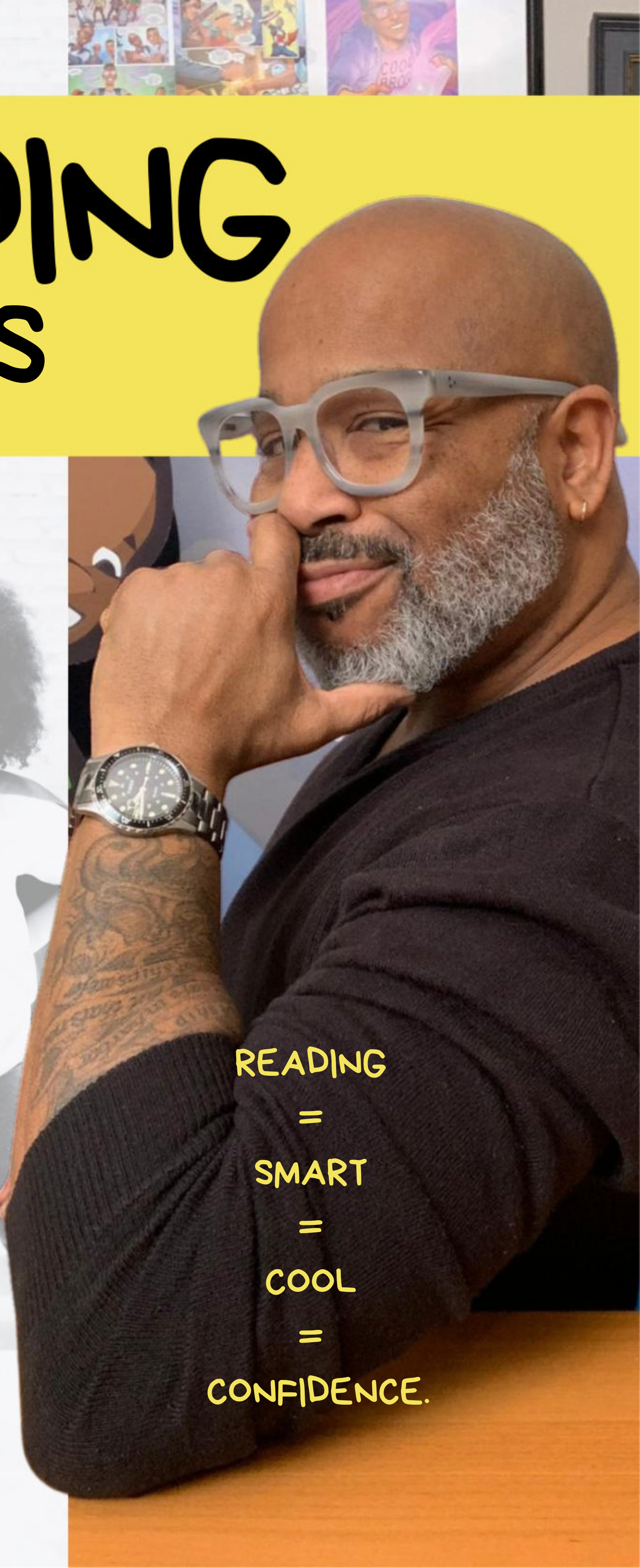
As a children's book author, I've had the privilege of inspiring children around the world to read, believe, achieve, and succeed. In fact, I created a comedic stand-up presentation that I perform at schools titled **"The Five Reasons You Need To Read"** to encourage young students to become readers. Here are my top five:

EXERCISE: The same way squats strengthen your legs and pushups strengthen your upper body, reading strengthens your brain, which is, by the way, your most important muscle.

CONFIDENCE: Being smart is the new cool, and reading makes you smarter, which gives you confidence!

READING = SMART = COOL = CONFIDENCE.

ENTERTAINMENT: Reading is not only the oldest form of entertainment but it's also the platform where other forms of entertainment are derived. Most of your children's favorite movies came from books. **Shrek, Harry Potter, The Wizard of Oz, Diary of a Wimpy Kid,** and, of course, every superhero movie originated from a book.



DANNY DOLLAR
MILLIONAIRE EXTRAORDINAIRE
THE LEMONADE ESCAPADE

READ
OR ELSE

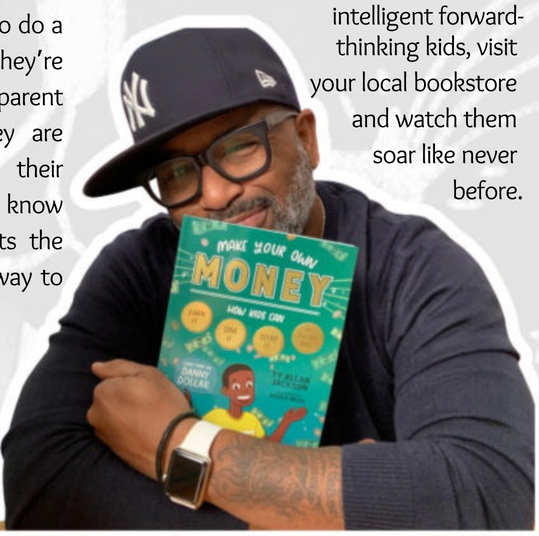
IMAGINATION: There is arguably nothing more powerful than your child's imagination. Within your imagination, you can do anything, anywhere, with anyone. It is also a preview of life's coming attractions. For you to be "it," you have to see "it," and your imagination is where you will find "it." And nothing enhances your imagination like a good book.

And the last one!

DRUMROLL PLEASE... KIDS WILL NEVER DO ANOTHER CHORE EVER!

Of course, this is in jest, but I tell kids that if they become a reader, the next time their parent asks them to do a chore, tell them that they're reading a book. And their parent will be so happy that they are reading that they will do their chores for them. Now they know that won't work, but it gets the kids laughing, it's a perfect way to end the presentation on a humorous note.

I truly believe that, other than love, the most important gift we can give our children is instilling the joy and power of reading. So if you want to raise strong intelligent forward-thinking kids, visit your local bookstore and watch them soar like never before.


MAKE YOUR OWN
MONEY
HOW KIDS CAN

FEDERAL RESERVE BANK of CLEVELAND
FEDERAL RESERVE BANK of CLEVELAND
FEDERAL RESERVE BANK of CLEVELAND
READ

LET'S TALK About the Kid's Table

Why Children's Authors Deserve a Better Seat

By Lauren Illguth

There's a quiet hierarchy in the book world. You don't always see it printed on programs or reflected in speaker fees, but you feel it in passing comments, festival schedules, and publishing priorities. At one event, someone casually mentioned how, at other festivals, children's authors are sometimes seated together or placed quietly at the back. I was genuinely surprised. It had never occurred to me that there might be a difference in how children's authors are treated compared to those who write for adults. But once I heard it, I couldn't stop thinking about it. That conversation stayed with me, and it's the reason I felt the need to write this.

Here's the thing: they shouldn't be.

Children's authors are the ones who write the books that help shape our love of stories long before we understand just how much it matters. They're the reason so many of us love stories in the first place. The reason we bring books to baby showers and cling to old copies of *Where the Wild Things Are* like they're sacred. They write for the most honest, distracted, emotionally charged audience there is, and yet they do it with magic, humor, and grace.

And yet, in so many ways, their work is undervalued.

Children's authors often don't get to meet their readers, not really. They don't receive long, thoughtful emails or social media DMs at midnight from readers who just finished their book. Their audience doesn't linger at the end of panels or send fan art by the dozen. In fact, their readers usually don't know how to spell their names. But that doesn't make their impact any less powerful. If anything, it makes their job even harder. They're writing for children, yes, but also for parents, for teachers, for future readers who are learning to navigate the world through rhythm, color, and character.

It's easy to underestimate their work, especially when you're picturing simple stories with a few words and bright pictures. But what they do is anything but simple. These are the storytellers who plant the very first seeds. They're not just writing for children; they're growing future readers. A great kids' book can spark joy, imagination, and that magical feeling of seeing a story unfold like a movie in your mind. When children fall in love with reading early, they come back. They keep reading. That spark is everything, and children's authors are the ones who light it. They deserve to be celebrated, and they absolutely deserve a seat at the front.

So next time you see a children's author in the wild—at a school, in a bookstore, in a tucked-away Instagram comment thread—take a moment to let them know their work matters. That your child loves their book. That you do, too. They might not always get the big spotlight, but what they do is big. Really big.

They deserve to be recognised, respected, and placed where they truly belong: front and centre.

THE ECO RANGERS SERIES

CANDICE LEMON-SCOTT
ECO RANGERS
PELICAN IN PERIL

CANDICE LEMON-SCOTT
ECO RANGERS
MICROBAT MAYHEM
SHORTLISTED
Environment Award for Children's Literature

CANDICE LEMON-SCOTT
ECO RANGERS
WILDFIRE RESCUE

Candice Lemon-Scott is an award-winning Australian author, wildlife carer, and passionate environmentalist whose books are inspiring a new generation of nature lovers. With a flair for fast-paced, quirky storytelling, Candice has penned over a dozen children's books, blending adventure, heart, and ecological awareness in a way that resonates deeply with young readers. Her background as a trained wildlife rescuer, coupled with her personal experiences (like nursing koalas in her backyard!), brings authenticity and care to every page.

Her *Eco Rangers series*, featuring best friends Ebony and Jay, is a powerful fusion of thrilling mystery and environmental action. Whether it's rescuing pelicans, bats, or solving wildfires, each book tackles real-world ecological issues in a way that's both engaging and empowering. Shortlisted for the Environment Award for Children's Literature and honoured in the Green Book Earth Awards, this series is a must-read for curious minds and budding changemakers.

👉 Discover more about the series and explore Candice's
other books at candicelemonscott.com.au/books
Books are available at all major online retailers,
local bookstores, and school book fairs.
Candice is available for Author Talks and Workshops - all ages

Book Review

Zak Buthmann - Age 12

Rise of the Mythix
by Anh Do

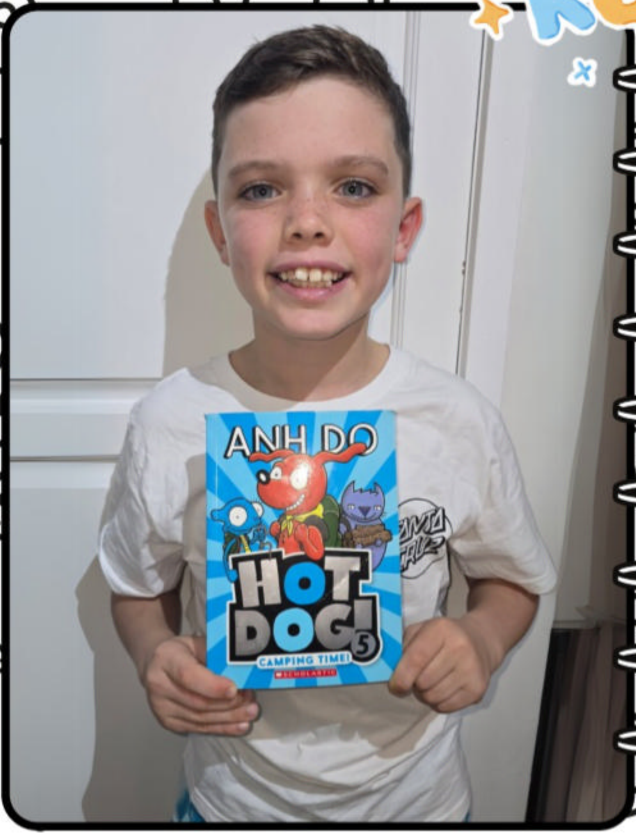
This story is about a girl called Kelly. She looks like an ordinary teenager - but she has powers! People are trying to capture her. Is she the Golden Unicorn?

My favourite character is William (the bad guy) because he has powers that are amazing. He also collects ancient artefacts to put on the wall.

This book is full of mystery and it is very intriguing. I really enjoyed it and would I would recommend it to kids 10 years and older.

4.5 ★★★★½

ANH DO
Mythix
GOLDEN UNICORN



Ashton Kouba- Age 10

Hot Dog 5
by Anh Do

Kev's Mum took Kev and his friends on a camping trip. Kev and his friends learnt how to chop wood, tie knots and to hear from far away.

I liked when Kev got lost and I also liked how Kev is good at chopping wood to make a raft so he could get to the crew. I dislike that the teacher didn't teach the crew any survival skills.

My favourite character is Kev because he always makes me laugh during the book. My favourite moment was when Kev, Lizzie and Hot Dog used all their survival skills to create a raft to get to the crew.

I would recommend this book because it is funny and enjoyable to read. I am a person who doesn't really like to read but when I read Anh Do's Hot Dog books they make me want to read more!

@littlepowerfulpeople

Discover Little Powerful People - A Beautiful Way To Raise Empowered Kids

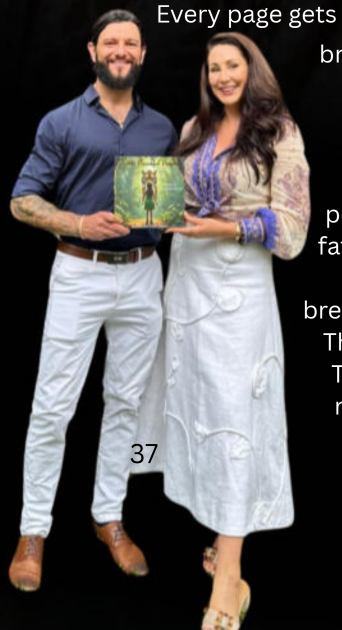
Childhood is supposed to be where dreams are born—but today, too many children are growing up in a world that chips away at their confidence before they even have a chance to find their voice.

Created by Elle Dixon and Joel Micallef, *Little Powerful People* was born from a simple but urgent belief: that children deserve to grow up believing they are strong, capable, and worthy—not just someday, but right now.

After years spent helping adults rebuild the confidence that life had worn down, Elle realized something powerful: real change doesn't start in adulthood, it starts in childhood. If you can give a child the tools to believe in themselves early, you can shape the way they face everything that comes next.

Animal Affirmations brings this mission to life. Through a vibrant combination of captivating animal illustrations and carefully chosen affirmations, Elle and Joel have created something more than just a beautiful book.

Every page gets young readers to affirm that they are brave, creative, kind, and powerful. Not because someone else says so, but because it's already true.



For Elle and Joel, this work is deeply personal. Joel's own journey as a single father, and he and Elle's shared passion for nurturing children's self-worth, breathe heart into every word and image. They know that the world can be heavy. They also know that children don't just need protection from it, they need the inner strength to stand tall within it.

The conversation around children's mental health is growing louder and for good reason. Books like Jonathan Haidt's *The Anxious Generation* have spotlighted how modern life with all its noise, comparison, and disconnection, is impacting young minds in ways we're only just beginning to understand.

But while books like that help us name the problem, *Little Powerful People* offers something else entirely: a way forward.

It's not just meant to be read once and shelved. This is the kind of book that lives on nightstands, and pulled out during moments of self-doubt. It's being used by parents, teachers, and carers to open up conversations that might otherwise stay buried.

We often talk about building resilience in kids. This is what it looks like in practice.

A child turning a page. Reading the words "I am strong". Saying them out loud. And then believing them.

It doesn't need to be loud to be powerful.
It just needs to reach the right hearts at the right time.

THE MAGIC OF BEDTIME STORYTELLING

by Mark Cunich

Sparking Growth, Imagination, and Connection

There's something timeless about the moment a child snuggles under the covers and says, "Tell me a story." It's a simple, magical request, and it holds far more power than we might realize. Bedtime storytelling is more than a soothing end to the day; it's a deeply enriching experience for both children and parents, fostering emotional growth, imagination, and stronger family bonds.

Why Bedtime Storytelling Matters

When we tell children stories, especially those made up on the spot, we invite them into a world of wonder, empathy, and possibility. This kind of imaginative storytelling stimulates parts of the brain that help with language development, emotional intelligence, memory, and problem-solving. It helps kids make sense of the world and gives them a safe space to explore emotions and big ideas.

But the benefits don't stop at brain development. Storytelling also plays a powerful role in nurturing resilience, encouraging creativity, and building a child's confidence. Hearing stories where characters overcome challenges, express emotions, or navigate unfamiliar worlds helps children learn to do the same in real life.

Strengthening Family Bonds

Equally important is the connection that grows during bedtime storytelling. In a world that moves quickly, this time offers a rare pause, a moment of presence and closeness. It's an opportunity to listen, laugh, wonder, and share something meaningful together. These nightly rituals become anchors of love and security, creating memories children carry with them long after the lights go out.

Enter *Story Sparks*: A New Way to Tell Stories Together

For families who want to make storytelling part of their bedtime routine but aren't sure where to start, *Story Sparks: Ignite Your Bedtime Storytelling* by Mark Cunich, makes it easy and fun. This interactive picture book is designed to help parents and children co-create stories with a simple flip of a page. With over 1,000 possible combinations, the book offers endless inspiration, from laughing pirates to silly dinosaurs and enchanted forests.

The beauty of *Story Sparks* is that it's easy to use, even if you've never tried storytelling before. Each page is filled with imaginative prompts that guide you, spark creativity, and make storytelling feel effortless. Like any new skill, storytelling gets better with practice, and part of the joy is growing together as storytellers, night after night.

STORY SPARKS
YOUR BEDTIME STORYTELLING!
Mark Cunich
STORY SPARKS
IGNITE YOUR BEDTIME STORYTELLING!

@storysparksbook

Everyone Can Be a Storyteller

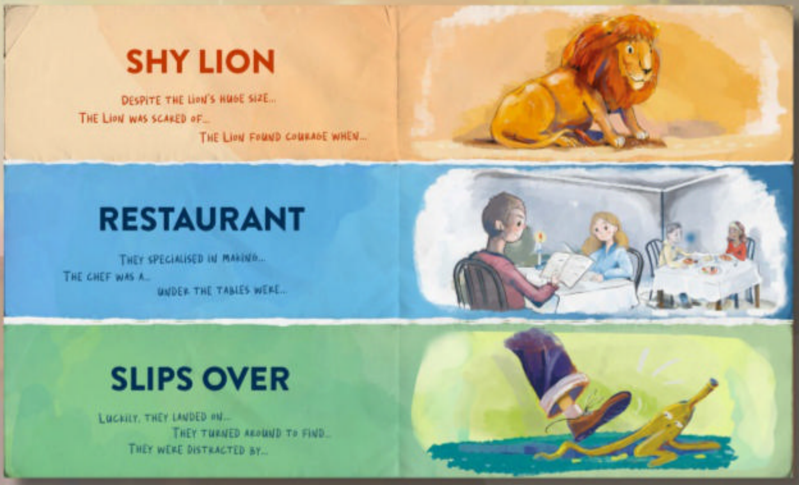
The best part? You don't need to be a writer or performer. You just need a little curiosity, a willingness to play, and a child who's ready to listen (and maybe add their own ideas!). Whether your story is silly, thoughtful, or completely wild, what matters most is that it's told with love.

Reading books to children is a wonderful tradition that builds literacy and connection, but impromptu storytelling adds another layer of magic. It helps children become active participants in their own imaginations, and it helps parents feel more involved in the creative process. Through this love of stories, their love for books will naturally continue to grow.

So tonight, when the lights are low and the day winds down, consider opening a new kind of book, not just one to read, but one to create stories with. You might be surprised at the adventures that unfold, and the memories you'll make along the way.

Story Sparks is more than a book—it's a gateway to wonder, laughter, and lasting connection. Everyone should try storytelling. The spark starts here.

CREATE YOUR OWN BEDTIME STORY WITH THESE PROMPTS FROM THE STORY SPARKS BOOK.



SHY LION

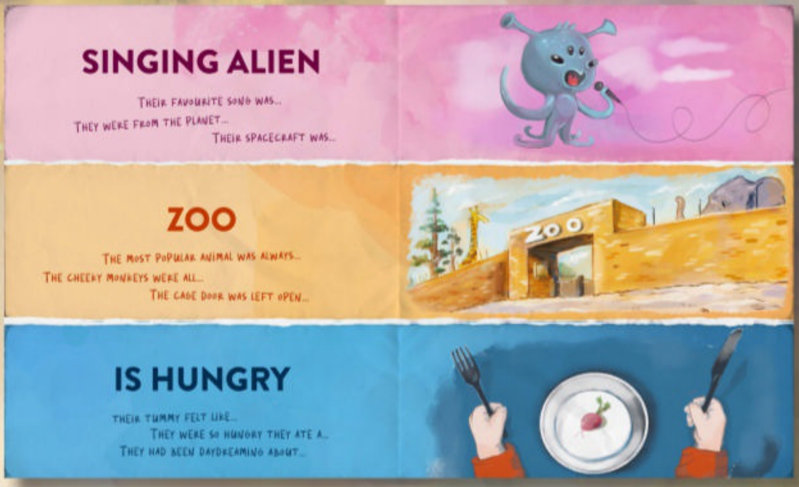
DESPITE THE LION'S HUGE SIZE...
THE LION WAS SCARED OF...
THE LION FOUND COURAGE WHEN...

RESTAURANT

THEY SPECIALISED IN MAKING...
THE CHEF WAS A...
UNDER THE TABLES WERE...

SLIPS OVER

LUCKILY, THEY LANDED ON...
THEY TURNED AROUND TO FIND...
THEY WERE DISTRACTED BY...



SINGING ALIEN

THEIR FAVOURITE SONG WAS...
THEY WERE FROM THE PLANET...
THEIR SPACECRAFT WAS...

ZOO

THE MOST POPULAR ANIMAL WAS ALWAYS...
THE CHEEKY MONKEYS WERE ALL...
THE CAGE DOOR WAS LEFT OPEN...

IS HUNGRY

THEIR TUMMY FELT LIKE...
THEY WERE SO HUNGRY THEY ATE A...
THEY HAD BEEN DAYDREAMING ABOUT...

Mark Cunich
STORY SPARKS
IGNITE YOUR BEDTIME STORYTELLING!
ZOO

This is the second time we've featured Mark in Book World Magazine—we absolutely love his story. We've bought Story Sparks *multiple times, and now all our friends and family have a copy too. You'll find Mark's books in Australian libraries and indie bookstores, or you can grab one directly from his website here.*

GRANDMA'S FIRST TATTOO
Phillip Gwynne
Tony Flowers
Hello!
Illustrated by Tony Flowers
SAURUS STREET
A Plesiosaur Broke My Bathtub
Nick Falk and Tony Flowers
Advance Australia FAIR
SAMURAI VS NINJA
Day of the Disco Undead
SAMURAI VS NINJA
The Race for the Shogun's Treasure
Small Town
Phillip Gwynne
Tony Flowers
Stories for BOYS
BILLY IS A DRAGON
Eaten Alive!
Nick Falk and Tony Flowers

From glassblowing in Tasmania to counter-terrorism and children's books, Tony Flowers' journey is anything but ordinary and his stories are only getting bigger.

If you happened to be at Storyfest this year, you might have caught Tony Flowers doing what he does best—sketching characters in real time as wide-eyed kids threw out questions, ideas, and the occasional challenge. On the surface, he's an acclaimed illustrator with more than fifty books to his name. But spend an hour with Tony, and you quickly realize there's a whole lot more beneath the surface. This is a man who's lived a dozen creative lives: glassblower, postman, customs officer, intelligence analyst, university lecturer, and now, graphic novelist.

We told Tony at the start of our conversation that we didn't want to write the usual story and he smiled. "Well, here's something no one really writes about..." he said.

What followed was a conversation about experience, travel, resilience, and creativity, and how every path he's taken has somehow led back to storytelling. And it all started in Ulverstone, a tiny town on Tasmania's northwest coast, where Tony never imagined any of this would be possible.

Tony Flowers' work is known across Australia and beyond. He's the illustrator behind series like *Saurus Street* by Nick Falk a madcap adventure series loved by primary school readers, and picture books like

DRAWING

TONY FLOWERS

FROM EXPERIENCE

@tony_flowers99

Grandma's First Tattoo, written by award-winning author Phillip Gwynne. Across genres, age groups, and formats, Tony's illustrations bring a distinct energy. But the version of his story that most people hear leaves out the parts he's only recently started talking about: how every job, every detour, every travel adventure has become part of the way he tells stories.

"I think everything in life teaches you something that becomes part of your work," he told us. "Even the jobs that don't seem connected—they are. It's all material. It all feeds the story."

Before he was an illustrator, Tony was a glassblower. He spent five years working professionally in Tasmania, drawn to the fluidity and precision the craft demanded. "The less you touch the glass, the more you let it fall and roll into its natural position, the more life and movement you have," he says. He sees the same spirit in watercolor. "You allow the water to do its thing. You just create the circumstances so it comes out the way you want it to."

When injury pulled him away from the furnace, Tony and his wife relocated to Sydney, where she began work as a scientist and he supported their growing family with full-time work including more than a decade in customs and border security. He did everything from airport operations to intelligence analysis and joint counter-terrorism. It was demanding work that required close observation and a deep understanding of how people operate under pressure. While it may seem worlds apart from children's books, Tony credits that period with sharpening his attention to detail, something he now brings into every story he illustrates.

And through it all, he kept drawing. On buses, in café corners, on lunch breaks and long evenings. "No one's going to discover you while you're sipping coffee," he says. "You have to put in the time. You have to start."

That resilience, that relentless commitment to the work, is something he now teaches as a lecturer at the University of Tasmania. Tony is adamant that art isn't some mystical gift you're born with. "Anyone can learn to draw," he says. "You just have to do it. Over and over. Like playing an instrument. You might not be a rockstar, but you can absolutely learn to play beautifully. Drawing is no different."

Today, Tony is stepping into an entirely new role one that he's worked toward for years. His upcoming graphic novel, *Divi and Frey and the Eye of Anubis*, will be released next year, and for the first time, Tony isn't just illustrating, he's doing it all. He's the author, the illustrator, the designer, the world-builder. It's a project that has been years in the making, and he lights up when talking about it. The story is his from start to finish, and you can feel how much that means to him.

It's a sweeping, cinematic adventure that blends mystery, mythology, and optical illusion into a bold, original series. The inspiration came from travel, specifically Egypt and Paris—and he doesn't just visit these places. He researches on the ground. He walks the streets his characters might walk. He rides canal boats through the tunnels beneath Paris, climbs dusty stairs in ancient Egyptian ruins, and, yes, even rides camels, all in the name of story. "Travel helps me write," he says. "I don't just go to see the place. I go with my characters in mind and let the city shape the story.

From hieroglyphics in the Louvre to a red amphibious car spotted on the Seine, *Divi and Frey* is built from real-world fragments, layered with imagination. The book is aimed at kids who are in grades 5–6, but Tony says it's for any reader who loves solving puzzles and diving into immersive worlds. He's writing with kids in mind, especially those who like a challenge, who pay attention, and who want to piece things together as they go.

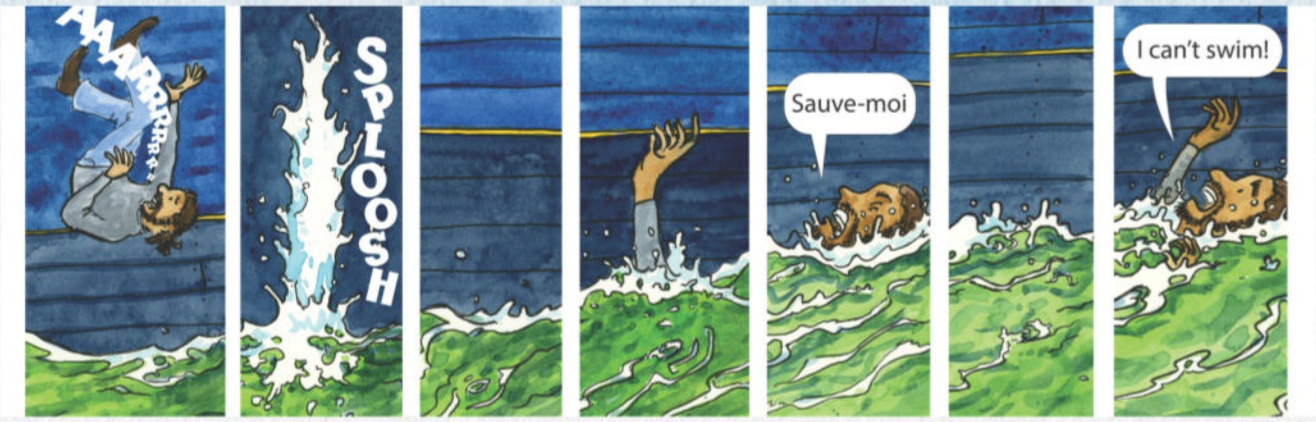
It's that same audience that fuels his passion for school visits and festivals like Storyfest. "Kids ask the best questions," he told us. "They don't hold back. They'll tell you exactly what they think. And when they're engaged, it's the best feeling in the world." It's a part of the industry he hadn't anticipated, but one he's grown to love.

Creativity runs deep in Tony's family, from animators and tattoo artists to sign writers and wildlife illustrators, it's clearly in the blood. But it's not just heritage that defines him. What sets Tony apart is how he approaches the work: with discipline, with heart, and with an unwavering respect for every single piece of the process.

"There's over a thousand panels in my book, and no one panel is more important than the other," he says. "They all have to be treated with as much love and care. Even the colour palettes I put on my pages, I treat them with care, because that's just my ethos and how I approach my work."

Tony Flowers isn't just an illustrator. He's a storyteller who draws from life—quite literally. So as we all await, eyes peeled, for the release of his graphic novel, we're thrilled to share a sneak peek.

It's a rare treat to enjoy this early glimpse of Tony's upcoming graphic novel *Divi and Frey and the Eye of Anubis*, and we feel fortunate to be able to share it with you. Thank you Tony.



She Sees The Reader Within, Finds The Book They Need, and Makes a Difference

Our Featured Librarian - **Vivienne Da Costa**

When we decided to spotlight a librarian in every issue of Book World Magazine, we knew we wanted to start strong. We wanted someone who didn't just manage a collection, but someone who truly lived and breathed the role—someone whose presence in a school library was shaping readers in ways that went far beyond lending out books.

We found that in Vivienne.

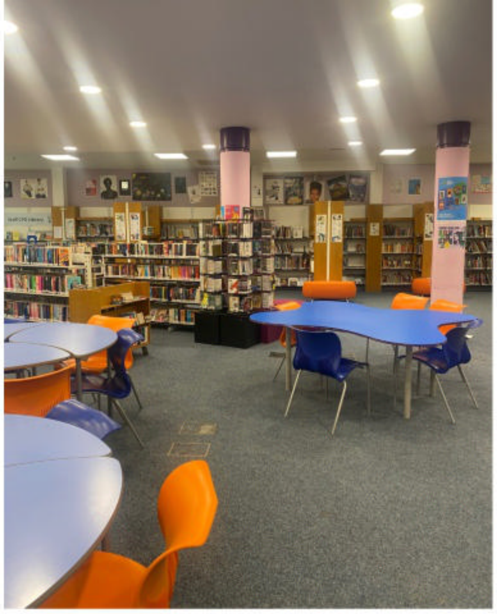
Vivienne is the library manager at Durrington High School, a large secondary school on the south coast of England with 1,600 students and a deeply diverse student body. Step into her library, and you won't just find books, you'll find laughter, jigsaw puzzles, beanbags, games, quiet music, and most importantly, kids. Lots of them. "I usually have up to a hundred students in the library every lunchtime," she tells us, casually. But you can hear the quiet pride in her voice. "It's their space. They come in to read, to color, to do homework… to just be."

Vivienne's path to this role wasn't straightforward. She began her career as a primary school teacher, earned a master's in creative writing, worked as a book blogger (with over a million hits), and even reviewed for publishers before finding her way into school libraries. Once she arrived at Durrington eight years ago, she never looked back. "It's the best job I've ever had," she says simply. "I get to help children read. I get to find them the books they'll love. I get to see their faces when something I've recommended just clicks. What more could I want?"

She was nominated to us via Instagram with the words: "She does absolutely amazing things for her school library." And after speaking to her, we couldn't agree more.

But Vivienne is more than a matchmaker between kids and books—she's a creator of culture. Her library lessons aren't just about comprehension. They're about purpose. During Cooking into March, students explored reading through recipes. On Valentine's Day, they took part in Blind Date with a Book, selecting titles based on short descriptions and coming back to share their thoughts.

She's also finding ways to make reading accessible. From dyslexia-friendly formats to translated Ukrainian and Chinese titles, from audiobooks to Braille, Vivienne is committed to meeting every



student where they are. She even helps students sign up for West Sussex's local library audiobook platform. One Ukrainian student, still learning English, now chats with Vivienne daily—with the help of Google Translate, of course.

And then there were the twins. Two Turkish girls were intrigued by a book on forced migration in class. Vivienne followed that curiosity and handed them stories reflecting their own lives and culture. "They just sat there reading, laughing, and loving it," she says. "That's when you know you've done something right."

The most borrowed title in her collection? *A Good Girl's Guide to Murder* by Holly Jackson. The one she wishes students would read more? *Scythe* by Neal Shusterman. As for her own bookshelf, Vivienne is as widely read as they come. She's currently enjoying *Fourth Wing, Before the Coffee Gets Cold,* and a new wave of Korean magical realism titles. She reads fast—often multiple books at once—and says the students try to keep up with her.

A Good Girl's Guide to Murder
HOLLY JACKSON

SCYTHE
NEAL SHUSTERMAN

Her approach to reading is honest and practical. "If you don't like a book, stop. Let's find something better," she says. "There's a book for everyone."

She's also made sure the library has spaces for magazines and newspapers. "A lot of them have never even seen a magazine," she says. "They don't know what they are." She stocks graphic novels, manga, quick reads, and even encourages staff to borrow books too. She's created a staff book club, a swap shelf, and lessons that align with curriculum topics—doing everything she can to keep the school community reading.

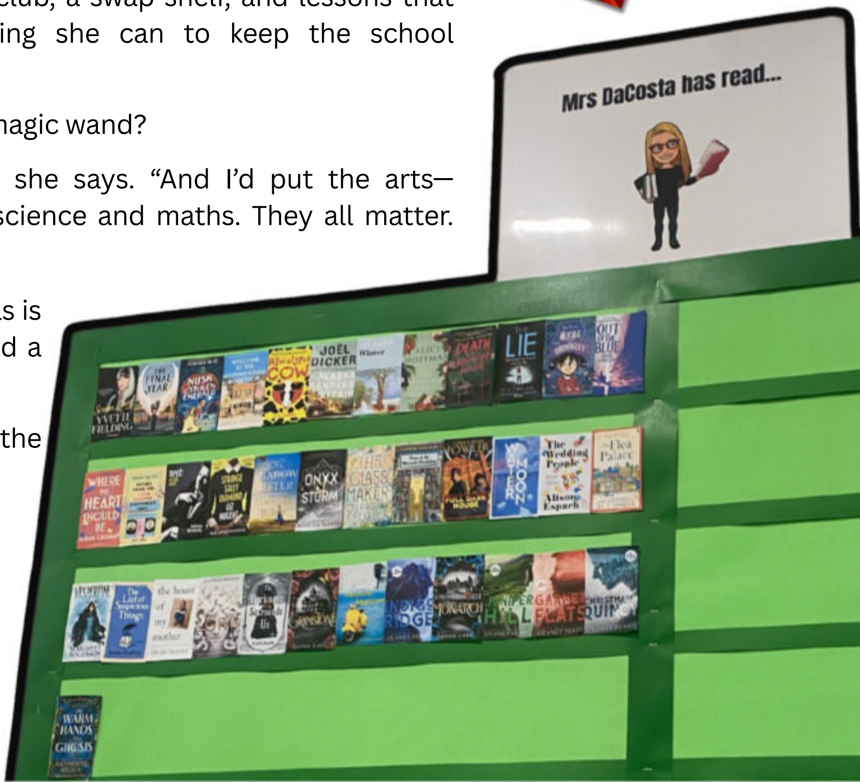
So what would she change if she could wave a magic wand?

"I'd make reading compulsory for everyone," she says. "And I'd put the arts—reading, drama, music—on the same level as science and maths. They all matter. You can't have one without the other."

She may not have a wand, but what Vivienne has is even better: vision, warmth, determination, and a deep, lifelong belief in the power of books.

And we couldn't be prouder to feature her as the very first librarian in our new series.

This is where the readers are. And Vivienne is at the heart of it.



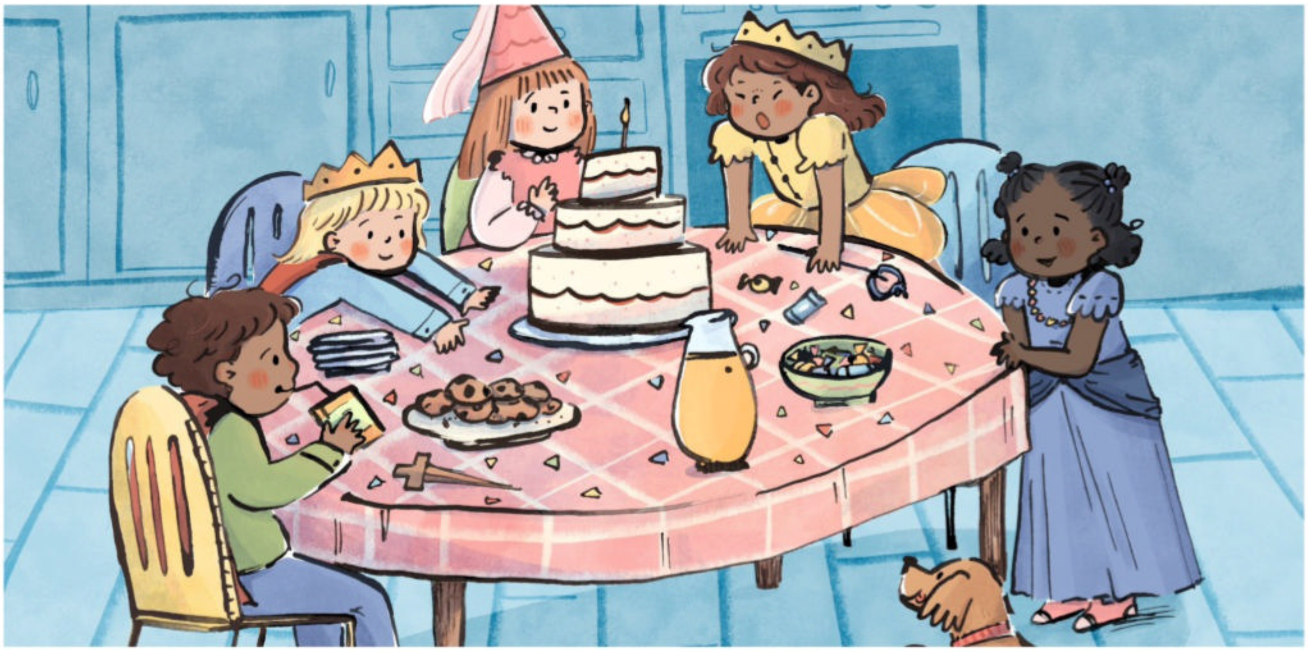
ERIN McCLEAN ILLUSTRATED

Be Good, Peanut
eriberart
ERIN McCLEAN ILLUSTRATION

THE LITTLE STREET LIBRARY
Amy Adeney
Erin McClean

Author Amy Adeney says she felt incredibly lucky that illustrator Erin McClean was chosen to bring *The Little Street Library* to life. It was a personal story years in the making, with the main character named after her daughter. Erin's illustrations were so spot-on they barely needed any changes, which is a rare and joyful experience in publishing. "She captured the warmth and beauty of the story so quickly," Amy said. Although they live on opposite sides of the world, the two finally met at the Bologna Children's Book Fair, which made the collaboration feel even more special.

@eriberart



Here at Book World Magazine, we have a bit of a soft spot for street libraries. We love what they represent: quiet generosity, community spirit, and that small thrill of finding a story waiting just for you. So when we spotted a book in an independent bookshop called *The Little Street Library* written by Amy Adeney it immediately caught our eye.

And then we saw the illustrations.

There was something about them. Whimsical. Soft. Full of warmth and feeling. The colours, the detail, the sense of joy and belonging. It felt like everything a child would want a picture book to be.

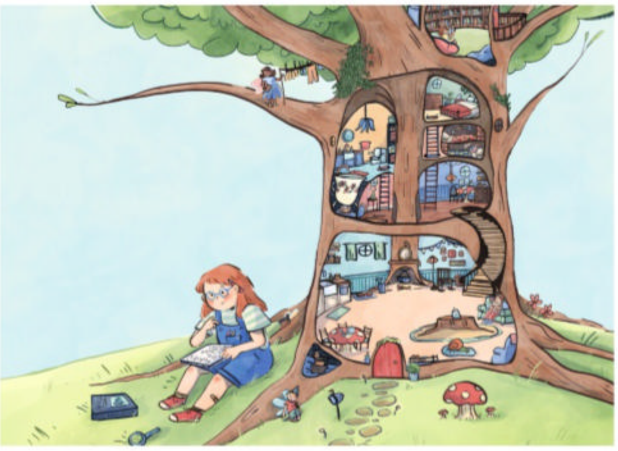
We bought the book on the spot. And then we looked up the name of the illustrator Erin McClean. We reached out to her, not just because we wanted to feature her, but because we genuinely wanted to know more. Who was this illustrator from Northern Ireland, and how had she illustrated a book that felt so Australian, so universal, and so completely enchanting?

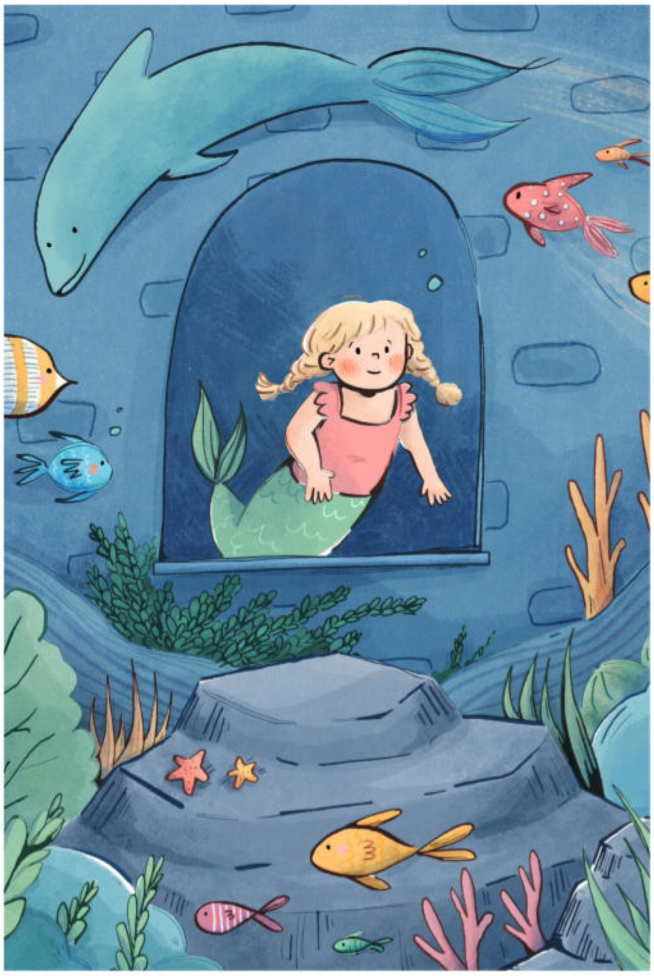
What we found was even better than we'd hoped.

Erin McClean didn't grow up in a family of artists. She wasn't a prodigy. She was a kid who loved drawing—so she did it. On schoolbooks, on desks, on her arms. She made little books by hand, some of which she still has to this day. What she did have was encouragement. "I wasn't naturally talented," she told us, "but my parents supported me. And I just kept going."

That persistence shaped everything. At university crossroads, she nearly chose English Literature over Illustration. But then she had a thought, the kind of quiet, slightly naïve thought that stays with you: "Someone has to illustrate children's books. Why not me?"

That decision led her to books like *The Little*





Street Library—a project she describes as a dream. Street libraries weren't common in Northern Ireland, so she researched them deeply. "I loved collecting photos of them," she said. "It's such a beautiful idea, how books can bring a community together."

Her process is equally thoughtful. She begins with the characters, sketching them over and over, getting to know their personalities and emotions. Then she thumbnails each page, experimenting with composition, pace, and storytelling details that go beyond the words on the page. "It's like visual problem-solving," she says. "And I love that."

There's a real emotional honesty in Erin's work. Her characters don't just look cute, they feel. Joy, worry, wonder—all the big feelings children carry. And sometimes, Erin feels them too. "If I'm drawing a grumpy kid," she laughs, "you'll probably catch me scowling at the paper."

She's also been sharing her work online since she was ten years old. Not for fame, just to watch herself grow. For fifteen years, barely anyone noticed. But she kept going. Today, her social media is followed by thousands, though she still treats it like a sketchbook. "You don't need a huge audience," she told us. "You just need the right people to see your work."

And Erin's work is being seen in the best way. She's written a middle-grade novel, several picture book manuscripts, and recently took a picture book dummy to the Bologna Children's Book Fair with the help of an arts council grant. She pitched to publishers and got valuable feedback. Her dream is to be both author and illustrator and she's quietly and steadily working towards it.

When we asked her what she'd draw just for fun, if there were no deadlines and no briefs, her answer said everything:
Fairy houses. Tiny ones. Intricate and imaginative, like something out of Brambly Hedge. "Worldbuilding is one of my favourite parts," she says. "I could get lost in it for hours."

And honestly, we think that's exactly what makes her special.

Erin McClean builds worlds that children and adults want to get lost in.

She reminds us that beautiful things are still being made in quiet corners of the world, by people who work hard, care deeply, and believe in stories.

We're so glad we found her in that bookshop. We think you'll be glad you've found her too.

Zayne Buthmann 12

Wolf Girl #1

by Anh Do

Gwen has lost both her parents and her sister. She is wandering in the forest and finds a golden wolf. Soon, she is making a new family with other dogs too. The story is about Gwen's adventures as she tries to find her parents and sister.

This book has so much action! Gwen's journey has a strong message about never giving up.

Zayne says - My favourite character is Gwen because she is smart, fast and brave.

This book gets 5 stars and I would recommend it for kids aged 8-12 year olds.

5.0 ★★★★★

ANH DO
WOLF GIRL
INTO THE WILD

Book Review

USA
The Green Ember: Book II
EMBER FALLS

Alexander Dixon age 10

Ember Falls (The Green Ember Series Book 2)

by S. D. Smith Illustrated by: Zach Franzen

This book is about brother and sister rabbits who are fighting for their freedom from an evil raptor named Morbin Blackhawk.

My favorite character is Picket Longtreader—the brother rabbit who is a brave warrior.

I recommend this book to anyone who likes a suspenseful book that keeps them on the edge of their seat.

Five stars!

5.0 ★★★★★

INDIE AUTHOR HIGHLIGHT

The Story She *Couldn't Find*

and the book that Helps Kids Through Grief

There are books about everything—adventure, friendship, animals that wear jumpers, talking dragons, magical librarians. But what if you're a child trying to understand something that doesn't feel like a story?

What if you've lost someone?

In Australia, one in twenty children will lose a parent before they turn 18. That statistic is hard enough, but it doesn't include the many more who lose grandparents, siblings, carers, guardians, or close family friends. Grief shows up in classrooms and dinner tables and birthday parties, and yet there are still so few books that help children make sense of it.

Liv Lorkin noticed this silence because she grew up with it.

"I lost my mum when I was one," Liv told us, "but I knew in primary school that things were different. I didn't have a mum like everyone else, and I really wanted to see or read stories—or have books or movies—where I didn't feel so alone."

The story she couldn't find is the one she eventually wrote.

Her middle-grade novel, *Sage and the Journey of Grief*, follows a young girl navigating life after her mother's death. It's tender, quiet, and honest—without neat answers or easy emotional arcs. Instead of placing the burden of healing on the child, it shows what support can look like. It shows what it means to simply be there.

"I didn't want to write a story where the child was the one doing the emotional labour," Liv says. "I wanted to write something that offered comfort and understanding—not solutions, but solidarity."

And that's what Sage offers. Not just a story, but a tool—for the child experiencing grief, and for the kids around them who don't know what to say. It's for the teachers, the parents, the friends. It's a book that opens doors to conversations most of us aren't sure how to begin.

Sage and the Journey of Grief is aimed at children aged 8–12, but the resonance goes far beyond that. It's the kind of book you might turn to when someone in your child's world is hurting, and you're not sure how to explain it. Because it's not just about those who have lost someone. It's about those who want to understand.

And she's not finished. There are more stories in her. You can feel it.

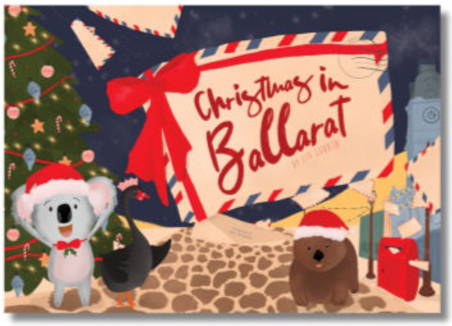
Sage and the Journey of Grief
Written & illustrated by
LIV LORKIN

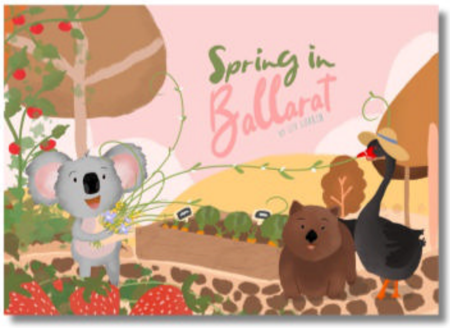
@livlorkin

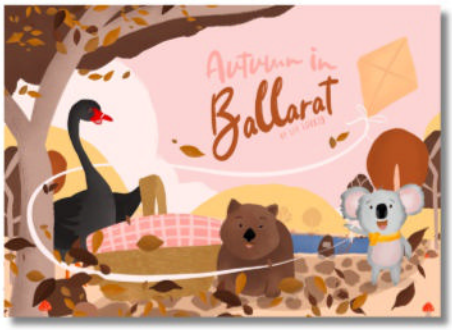
Because in a world where loss so often goes unspoken,
we need books that help us say something.

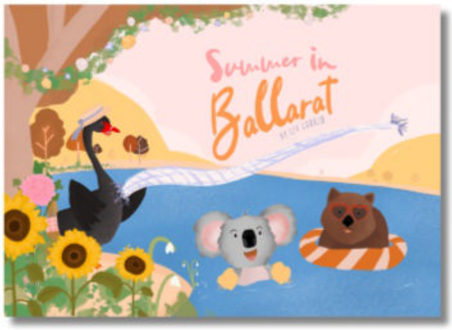
Books like this don't just help us read.

They help us breathe.


Christmas in Ballarat


Spring in Ballarat


Autumn in Ballarat


Summer in Ballarat

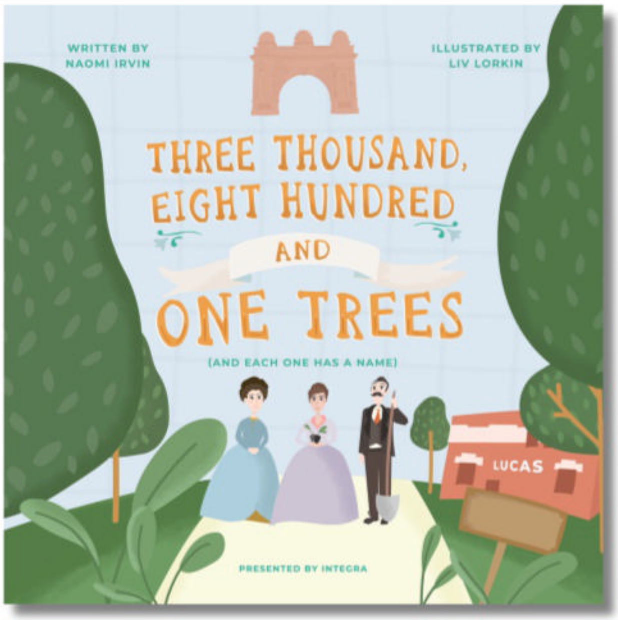
Liv never imagined herself as a writer. She began as an illustrator, sketching native animals and turning local landmarks into magical backdrops for her Ballarat picture book series. She even created the cover of Sage before writing the story because that's how her process starts—with an image. "It's how I understand what I'm trying to say," she explains.

She has self-published every one of her books, learning everything from typesetting to distribution on the fly. "I had no idea what I was doing," she laughs. "I posted the cover of *Winter in Ballarat* on Instagram, and people asked to buy it. I sold a hundred copies before I'd even written the story."

Since then, she's sold thousands more—quietly, intentionally, and without a big publisher behind her. She's donated copies of Sage to Street Libraries across Victoria and New South Wales, shared her work at festivals and library events, and built a community of readers who see something of themselves in her words and pictures.

To learn more about Liv's books or to order a copy of *Sage and the Journey of Grief,* visit **www.livlorkin.com,**

WELCOME HOME!
When your TBR welcomes you home . . .
!?!
\?
!!


WRITTEN BY NAOMI IRVIN
ILLUSTRATED BY LIV LORKIN
THREE THOUSAND, EIGHT HUNDRED AND ONE TREES
(AND EACH ONE HAS A NAME)
LUCAS
PRESENTED BY INTEGRA

BELGIAN
Waffle Batter

Ingredients:

3 eggs, separated
1 ¾ cup milk
125g unsalted butter, melted
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
2 cups self raising flour
¼ cup caster sugar

Directions:

- Preheat waffle maker to recommended baking temperature for your appliance.
- Place egg yolks, milk, butter and vanilla in a medium bowl and whisk until well combined.
- Combine flour and sugar into a large mixing bowl and make a well in the centre
- Carefully whisk in egg milk mixture to form a smooth batter.
- Lightly grease the waffle maker with oil and pastry brush before pouring mixture into the bottom baking plate.
- Close lid and bake for 3-5 minutes or until cooked through

RISE OF THE WITCHES
family
@mljewell.author

Enjoy!

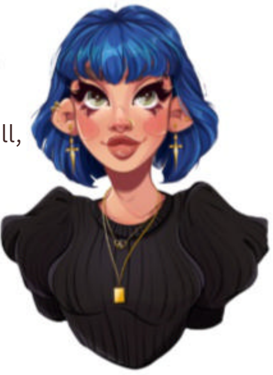
In my family, waffles have always been part of our big moments—especially on Christmas morning. We've always had waffles with fresh fruit, and it's a tradition that goes all the way back to my great-grandmother. She had a waffle maker that became something of a family heirloom. My grandmother would bring it over and make waffles for us, and after she passed away, it was passed down to my mum.

A few years ago, on Christmas morning, the old waffle maker finally stopped working. We were honestly devastated. But my mum and I decided we weren't going to let the tradition end there. We went out and bought a new one.

We recently all got together for Easter, and of course there were waffles—smothered in maple syrup (that's how I like them). I also got to catch up with my dad, who's been working on new artwork for The Datura Chronicles. Right now, he's painting the library from Datura, and I'm so grateful to be able to collaborate with him and see my stories come to life through his art.

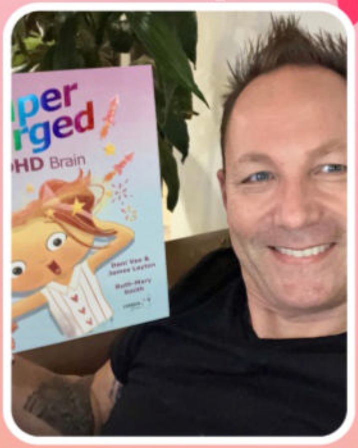
Thank You

Author M.L. Jewell,
for sharing a
family recipe.



Celebrating Brains That Think Differently

with LARRIKIN House



James Layton

Childhood should be a time of color, curiosity, and confidence, but for kids with ADHD, it's often filled with correction, confusion, and being told they're "too much." *My SUPERCHARGED ADHD Brain* is here to change that.

Written by Dani Vee and James Layton, both of whom were diagnosed with ADHD as adults, this joyful picture book wants to reframe what it means to have a neurodivergent brain. It's not a list of what's hard, it's a celebration of what's brilliant. The book's narrator compares their mind to a race car, a rocket ship, and a popcorn machine that just keeps POP-POP-POPPING. The story moves fast, makes you laugh, and shines a light on the real superpowers of an ADHD brain—creativity, energy, imagination, and empathy.

Dani Vee

For Dani, this book is deeply personal. "I would've done anything to have this book as a kid," she says. "It's taken me decades to learn to love my own brain." James echoes that sentiment, reflecting on the very thing that led him to launch Larrikin House. "ADHD allowed me to run multiple businesses, be impulsive enough to start a publishing house with no idea how to do it, and keep 50 tabs open at once," he laughs. "I call that a superpower."

That same supercharged energy is what drives Larrikin House today, a small publishing company known for taking fun seriously and never sticking to the rules. Before Dani joined in 2021, James had already made a name for Larrikin with the breakout hit *My Shadow Is Pink by Scott Stuart.* But when Dani came on board, things kicked up a gear. Together, they've built a brand that thrives on chaos, creativity, and challenging tired stereotypes. They've expanded into junior fiction, middle grade, graphic novels, and even commercial adult fiction. Sometimes signing contracts with authors at the pub, because nothing says Larrikin like sealing a deal over a drink.

Ruth-Mary Smith

To bring *My SUPERCHARGED ADHD Brain* to life, they collaborated with illustrator Ruth-Mary Smith, who's raising ADHD kids herself. Her warm, whimsical illustrations capture what it feels like to have a brain that doesn't stop, one that daydreams, forgets things, talks too much, loves deeply, and imagines endlessly.

The book had already sold over 5,000 copies before its official May release, and is now in its second print run. It also launches a new series of neurodivergent picture books from Larrikin House, stories that don't just educate, but uplift.

For kids who think differently, this book offers joy and recognition. For the adults raising and teaching them, it offers understanding. And for Dani and James, it's the kind of book they needed when they were young. "We're in it for the dopamine," they joke. But truthfully? They're in it to flip the story and make sure no child grows up thinking their brain is anything less than extraordinary.

@larrikinhouse

Find out more at larrikinhouse.com.au

THE POWER OF POSITIVE PRANKING
NAT AMOORE
SECRETS OF A SCHOOLYARD MILLIONAIRE

NOT JUST ANOTHER KID'S AUTHOR

NAT AMOORE

The Power of Positive Pranking
Nat Amoore

The wildly unconventional, totally relatable, and brilliantly honest Nat Amoore

Before she was one of Australia's bestselling children's authors, Nat Amoore was mid-air on a trapeze, running a circus, cutting music videos for Sony, or workshopping movie scripts that almost got made. So when people ask how she ended up writing books for kids, her answer is simple: "I never really left childhood."

It's not just a cute line. Nat's work is fuelled by a genuine connection to the kid she used to be and still kind of is. "I've got a bit of Peter Pan syndrome," she says with a grin. "I've always related better to kids than adults."

She didn't grow up planning to write for children. In fact, her first book *Secrets of a Schoolyard Millionaire* was originally a movie pitch. After years of trying to publish a fantasy novel and getting knocked back, she pivoted. Not because she wanted to play it safe, but because she was ready to try something that felt fun, real, and truly her. That 'just give it a crack' instinct paid off; the book became the bestselling debut children's fiction title of 2019 in Australia.

But what makes Nat different isn't just the sales figures. It's how deeply she gets her audience.

"Kids are just people. I like some of them. Some of them, not so much! Just like adults.“

That attitude—playful, unsentimental, and refreshingly human runs through everything she writes. Her books are laugh-out-loud funny, but they also wrestle with real questions: Can you do the wrong thing for the right reasons? Where's the line between justice and revenge? Why are grown-ups so weird about rules?

After watching Nat on stage at Storyfest, seeing her light up in front of a crowd of schoolkids, then hearing her chat so openly and

SECRETS OF A SCHOOLYARD MILLIONAIRE
NAT AMOORE

warmly in conversation, there was no way we weren't going to shoot our shot. She just pulls you in. She's funny, outgoing, down-to-earth, and so incredibly generous with her time and energy. The kind of person who feels instantly familiar, like someone you'd want to sit next to on a long-haul flight or at a chaotic kids' table, the fun kind.

Nat doesn't just write books, she performs them. At schools, festivals, and libraries across the country, she's known for connecting with kids in a way that's all heart and zero ego. She's had fans line up for signings and cry, burst into laughter, and even wet themselves! (Yes, really. She tells the story with warmth and zero embarrassment: "She just didn't want to lose her place in line. It was adorable.")

Her characters have become the names of school classes (Year 5 Casey, named after the main character in *The Power of Positive Pranking*). Her books spark fundraising projects, social justice campaigns, and classroom discussions. *Secrets of a Schoolyard Millionaire* has even inspired students to create their own small businesses and donate the proceeds to charity.

"I don't have kids of my own. People say, 'How can you write for children if you don't have any?' But I used to be one," she says, unfazed. "Honestly, I think of them as my peers. I just really get them, and they seem to get me."

She's published eight books in five years, including *We Run Tomorrow*, the award-nominated *The Right Way to Rock*, and her brand-new picture book *I Don't Need a Little Brother*, out this June. Her books have been translated and published in the US, UK, Estonia, Italy, China, and beyond, sometimes with new titles and slight adjustments for local markets, but always with that same spark.

THE POWER OF POSITIVE PRANKING
NAT AMOORE
THE RIGHT WAY TO ROCK
NAT AMOORE
WE RUN TOMORROW
NAT AMOORE
MIKE BARRY
NAT AMOORE
SECRETS OF AN UNDERCOVER ACTIVIST
NAT AMOORE
SECRETS OF A REBEL ROCK STAR
NAT AMOORE

SHOWER LAND
BREAK THE CURSE
NAT AMOORE
JAMES HART
SHOWER LAND
FEEL THE FREEZE
NAT AMOORE
JAMES HART
SHOWER LAND
WALK THE PLANK
NAT AMOORE
JAMES HART

Through it all, her message is clear: kids deserve stories that respect them. Not just fun and fast (though hers absolutely are), but stories that challenge them, reflect them, and treat them like the smart, curious people they already are.

"I never want to write down to kids," she says. "A lot of what I write is about the things I don't understand. I figure if I'm still trying to figure them out as an adult, maybe kids are too."

She's not trying to teach. She's not pushing a lesson. She's writing with them, not for them. And it shows.

"We know we'll lose them in a heartbeat if we're not doing it right."

She's not trying to impress the adults in the room.
But the kids are listening.
She's all in.

@nat_amoore

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Every reader has a story and we'd love to hear yours. Whether it's a book that changed your life, a childhood memory tied to a favorite author, or a moment that shaped your love of reading, your story could inspire others across the Book World.

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SMALL STORIES Big LESSONS

DEAR JOHNNY
and the
Bad Mood Cloud

Why Social Stories Matter for Every Child

By Alana Johnson

When we think about how children learn, we often imagine classrooms, flashcards, or hands-on activities. But there's one form of teaching that's as old as humanity itself, and it's still one of the most powerful tools we have: **storytelling**.

For children, stories aren't just entertainment. They are roadmaps to understanding the world. And when crafted intentionally, they can help kids navigate everything from simple social interactions to complex emotions. That's where social stories come in.

What Are Social Stories?

Social stories are short, simple narratives that describe a situation, skill, or concept in a way that helps children understand what's expected and why it matters. They were originally developed by **Carol Gray** in 1991 to support autistic children with social understanding, but they've since become widely embraced by educators, speech pathologists, disability workers—and increasingly, by parents—for children of all backgrounds and abilities.

The idea is simple: when you create a story tailored to a child's needs—maybe starting school, taking turns, or asking for help—you're offering them a script for real life. You're building understanding, reducing anxiety, and making expectations clearer.

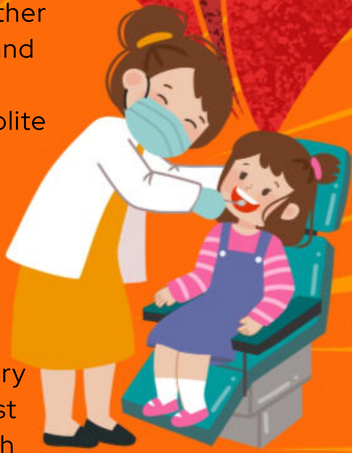
And while they were designed to support neurodivergent children, the truth is, **every child can benefit from social stories**.

Why All Kids Need Social Stories

Children aren't born understanding social cues, emotional regulation, or cultural norms. These are learned behaviors—and one of the most effective ways to teach them is through narrative. When we embed ideas like kindness, honesty, or resilience into a story, we make those values feel real and relatable.

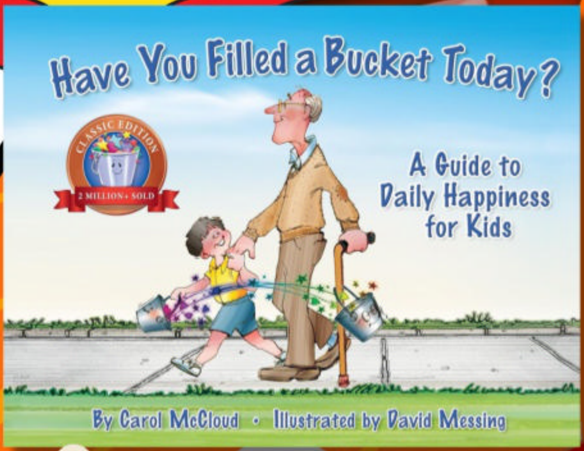
Social stories help kids ...

- Understand the "why" behind a rule or expectation
- See the impact of their actions on others
- Build empathy and awareness
- Gain confidence in new or challenging situations



They give children context, which is something many of us take for granted. Whether it's about putting your hand up to speak in class or understanding why it's polite to respond when someone says hello—these are concepts that can be gently taught through story.

For example, a social story about going to the dentist might walk a child through each step—what the waiting room looks like, the sound of the chair, the feeling of having their teeth cleaned—so they feel prepared instead of overwhelmed. That kind of preparation turns the unknown into something manageable. and that they help them feel supported and understood.



Have You Filled a Bucket Today?

CLASSIC EDITION

2 MILLION+ SOLD

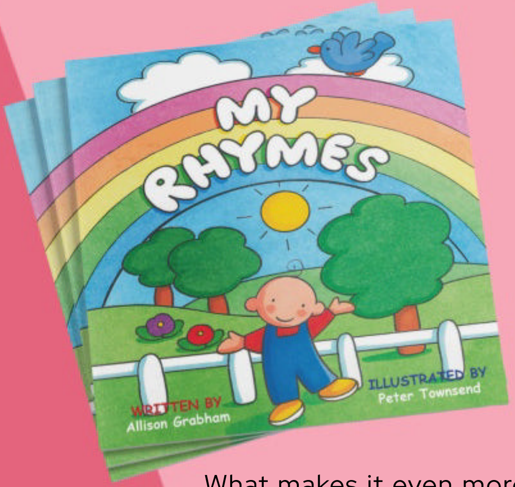
A Guide to Daily Happiness for Kids

By Carol McCloud • Illustrated by David Messing

But Aren't We Already Doing That in Books?

Yes! And that's the beauty of it.Even though social stories are often personalized, the truth is, many children's books are already doing the work of a social story. Some authors are creating books that don't just tell a story—they guide behaviour in ways that are practical, repeatable, and designed to help children grow. These books might not be labelled as social stories, but that's exactly what they are in spirit.

A well-known favorite like *Have You Filled a Bucket Today?* introduces kids to the idea that kindness isn't just something we do—it's something we give and receive. It's a longer book, but the message is crystal clear, and it's easy to build on with smaller, more specific social stories tailored to everyday life.

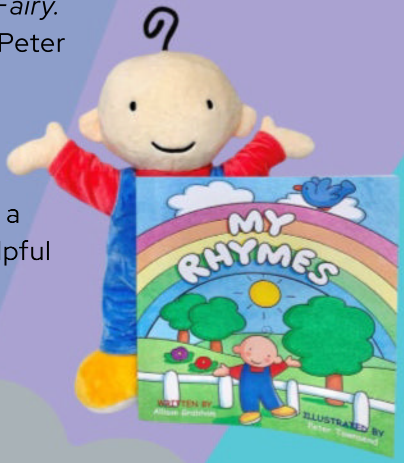


Allison Grabham's ***My Rhymes*** isn't a social story in the traditional sense, but it serves a similar and equally powerful purpose. This beautifully illustrated book uses short, memorable rhymes—set to music and paired with engaging imagery—to help young children navigate everyday routines like getting dressed, eating breakfast, brushing their teeth, and winding down for bed. With its singable structure and simple language, ***My Rhymes*** offers parents a gentle, playful way to support their child's emotional regulation and daily rhythm.

What makes it even more engaging is that you can also listen to the rhymes on SoundCloud or sing along with Danny on **YouTube @myrhymes**. These songs bring the book to life, making it easy for parents and educators to incorporate music and movement as they read—helping children absorb the message in a more sensory, memorable way. It's a brilliant tool to support kids, especially on those tricky mornings when nothing seems to go to plan.

The character featured in ***My Rhymes*** is Danny, lovingly created by renowned illustrator Peter Townsend, who has also illustrated *Bananas in Pyjamas, The Wiggles,* and *Fergus the Fairy.* Every illustration in the book is hand-drawn and painted with incredible care. In fact, Peter created Danny back in 1999, and he's now the heart of the book and website. Danny also comes to life in soft toy form—with outfit changes available—making the book an even more tactile and engaging experience.

I bought ***My Rhymes*** for my niece's birthday, and she absolutely loves it. It's become a regular part of her routine with her mum. It's one of those rare resources that's as helpful as it is joyful.



You can find ***My Rhymes***, listen to the music, or order the plush Danny toy via:
👉 **www.myrhymes.com.au**

Dear Johnny and the Bad Mood Cloud

...was the beginning of something special. It started with one of those parenting moments we all know—a tough day, big feelings, and a little boy trying to make sense of it all. Tracey Rouette sat down with her son Johnny to talk through his meltdown, and together they came up with a plan: "Take a big breath, throw away the grumpy face, and get a hug from my favourite person!"

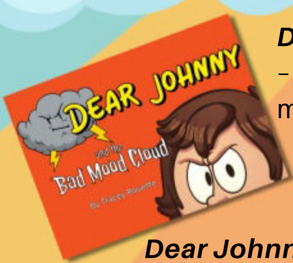
DEAR JOHNNY
Bad Mood Cloud

That plan became the heart of a book—and then a series.

What Tracey did next is something many parents think about but few follow through on: she turned a family moment into a tool that could help others. tot books was born from her desire to give kids simple and honest strategies for handling life's trickier moments. And because the books are based on real strategies that worked in her own home, they are instantly relatable.

Each story centres on three practical steps to help children self-regulate. They're not complicated. They don't require apps or fancy charts. Just a story, a few thoughtful actions, and a lot of heart. And the results speak for themselves: children feel seen, empowered, and a little more prepared for the big feelings that come their way.

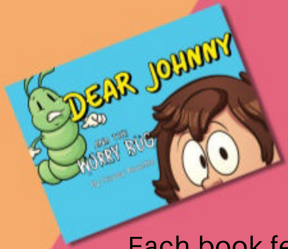
The Dear Johnny series includes:



Dear Johnny and the Bad Mood Cloud – Helping kids shift out of grumpy moods with a sunny three-step plan

DEAR JOHNNY
AND THE
SHARING MONSTER
By Tracey Rouette

Dear Johnny and the Sharing Monster – A playful way to teach sharing and how to handle frustration



Dear Johnny and the Worry Bug – Supporting children as they face fears and navigate anxiety

Each book features Tracey's real-life family: Johnny, his cheeky younger brother Jimmy, their tall, supportive dad, Sam, and the beloved Labrador, Ted. The stories are charming and funny, but always grounded in care—and the kind of love that says, "I see you. Let's work through this together."

Tracey Rouette is a powerful example of how everyday parenting challenges can be transformed into lasting tools—not just for your own child, but for many others. tot books make emotional learning gentle, doable, and truly effective.

You can explore the full tot books range and learn more about Tracey's journey at:
👉 www.totbooks.com.au

We don't have to choose between published picture books and personalized social stories. In fact, some of the most powerful moments happen when we use both.

Books like *Have You Filled a Bucket Today?* or *Dear Johnny and the Worry Bug* can spark conversations, emotions, and questions. From there, a parent, teacher, or therapist can create a simple social story that brings that learning closer to home.

Every book can be a beginning. Every story—when chosen with care, can lead a child somewhere meaningful.

For more resources on Social Stories, check out our blog article at www.bookworld.club

Bringing the joy back to book club

We get it, book club nights are magic… but planning them? Not so much. That's why we created *Book World Club Guides:* ready-to-go downloads filled with food, games, and talking points tailored to your book.

Printable Bookmarks
THANK YOU
NOVEL Nibbles
Book World

Turn your night from ordinary to unforgettable:

- ✦ A themed recipe to share
- ✦ A fun way to break the ice
- ✦ Good books and meaningful conversations
- ✦ Stress less, enjoy more

Book clubs should be as easy as good friends and a good read.

Don't see your book featured online? Ask us, and we'll create one for you.

Explore our guides today at bookworld.club

BOOK CLUB QUIZ

This time, we're throwing it back to the books we grew up with: the classics, the bestsellers, and the ones that shaped generations. Here's your children's book quiz.
Find all the answers at bookworldmagazine.com/quiz-answers.

What was the first Golden Book ever published?

Which author is known for inventing over 500 new words, including "Oompa-Loompa" and "frobscottle"?

Which children's book became one of the first to ever include interactive flaps to lift?

What country is *Pippi Longstocking* originally from?

What year did the Golden Books series begin publishing in the United States?

How many copies has the *Harry Potter* series sold globally (approx.)?

What book includes the line, "I love you right up to the moon—and back"

In *The BFG*, what does BFG stand for?

What's the message behind *The Rainbow Fish*?

Approximately how many copies of *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* have been sold worldwide?

Who wrote *Winnie-the-Pooh*?

What children's book begins with a boy going to bed and sailing to an island of monsters?

What classic children's book begins with "Once there was a tree..."?

Which book series features Claudia, Kristy, Mary Anne and Stacey?

What children's book famously features a red and white striped hat?

Penny For
My Thoughts

Penny's Y.A. Shelf

"This time with my Granny"

We always look forward to Penny's wise and witty reflections in our "Penny for My Thoughts" column—but this issue brings something extra special. For the first time ever, Penny invites a very special guest into the spotlight: her beloved Granny. What follows is a heartwarming conversation between two generations of book lovers, filled with cherished memories, childhood book stacks, and reflections on how stories shape us. From supermarket trolleys turned reading nooks to emotional five-star reviews, their shared passion for books will warm your heart and maybe even inspire your next trip to the library.

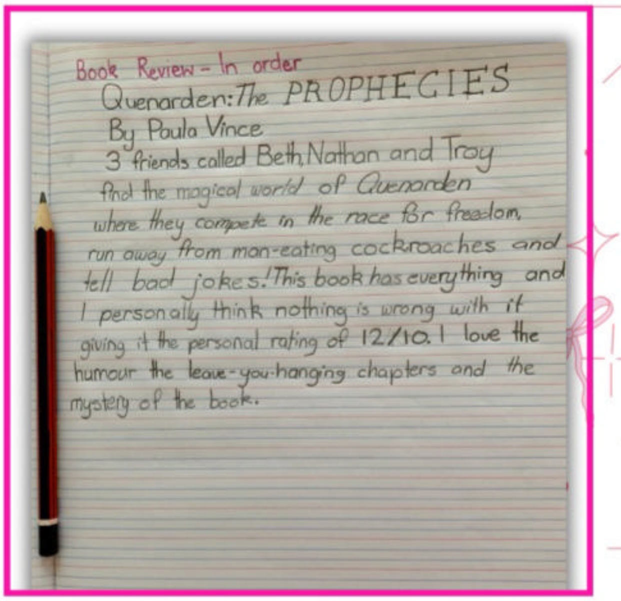
Granny: Penny, one of the things I love about you is your passion for books. And I totally get it, because reading and the power of story is a passion of mine, too. Remember when you were small and we used to go on a Grouting (i.e., Granny outing) to the library? We almost needed a trolley to bring home all the books! And talking of trolleys—I remember you coming with me to the supermarket and you'd sit inside one and read with the groceries piled up all around you.

Penny: That was so much fun! We should do it again.

Granny: We absolutely should! Probably just the library part though 😉 Tell me, what would you consider to have been your top three series back in those days? What was so special about them?

Penny: *The Warrior Cats* by Erin Hunter, *Percy Jackson* by Rick Riordan, *Quenarden: The Prophecies* by Paula Vince. I'm honestly not sure what was special about them, I just know I read them over and over. Like probably hundreds of times!

Granny: I love how you were writing reviews even back then!



Book Review - In order
Quenarden: The PROPHECIES
By Paula Vince
3 friends called Beth, Nathan and Troy
find the magical world of Quenarden
where they compete in the race for freedom,
run away from man-eating cockroaches and
tell bad jokes! This book has everything and
I personally think nothing is wrong with it
giving it the personal rating of 12/10. I love the
humour the leave-you-hanging chapters and the
mystery of the book.

Penny: And it's funny to see the similarities in the way I write them even now.

Granny: Yes, there's a few! Can you remember what made you fall in love with books in the first place?

Penny: I really liked books, but if it hadn't been for you, I probably wouldn't have become obsessed. You're the one who encouraged me by taking me to the library after school, and reading *Little Women* and *Little House on the Prairie* to me. Those books really got me going.

Granny: Awww, that's so lovely! But let's face it—reading is such a sensible obsession, right?

Penny: Right!

Granny: Can you tell me how your love of books has influenced you as you've grown older?

Penny: It's influenced my bank account, definitely😆 I'm also really keen to encourage my younger siblings to get into the world of books. Books have educated me, widened my general knowledge, and taught me lots of trivia I might never have to use, but it's so much fun. I remember watching the Titanic movie and recognising the names of lots of the passengers because I'd read a book about it, over and over. **Reading is powerful.**

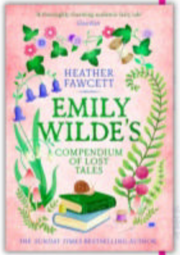
Granny: It certainly is. In your opinion, what are the 'must haves' to make a story fabulous?

Penny: A book can have the most incredible plot, but if the author doesn't have a great writing style, I can't read it. I also must connect with the characters. If you can make me cry over them, then the author has done really well. The storyline and worldbuilding is important too. All those things need to work together for me to give a book a five-star review.

Granny: If you could jump inside three YA books and be the main character for a day, which ones would you choose, and why?

RETURN TO SENDER
LAUREN DRAPER

Penny: First, I would choose *Return to Sender,* by Lauren Draper. I love that it's got a sense of community in it. Without giving too much away, it's got adventure with teenagers and it's set in a small town—my favorite setting in books and real life.



Second would be Emily Wilde's *Compendium of Lost Tales,* by Heather Fawcett. It's the last book in the trilogy and I've chosen it because by this stage, Emily knows so much, lots has happened, and it would be wonderful to have all that knowledge. Plus there's romance, which is cute.

DARKLY
MARISHA PESSL

Third, I'd choose to be Arcadia from *Darkly*, by Marisha Pessl. It's such a unique storyline and every time I thought I knew what was happening, a plot twist was thrown in. The idea of experiencing that as a character is extremely appealing.

Granny: Love how you think!

Granny: Love how you think! And thanks for answering my questions.

Penny: No problem. See you between the pages xx

And, as we've come to love
(and her Granny proudly reminds us),
Penny has once again dug deep
and delivered a thoughtful review
of a YA novel.
It's a joy to see her passion
for storytelling still going strong after
all these years—and we can't
wait to see where her book-reviewing journey takes her next.

AMY WILSON
Shadows of Winterspell
Deep in the forest, magic is waiting

SHADOWS OF WINTERSPELL

Amy Wilson

(Written for ages 7-13)

★★★★½

While I'm not in the target market for this book, I would've read it anyway because of the gorgeous cover. The writing style was super cute had a really great flow, and I thought overall the plot was great. It had some wonderful cozy vibes.

I think the world building needed to be a bit better developed, but maybe that's from a non-child point of view. The ending was a little fast paced, but honestly not too bad.

The plot was really cute. I loved how it had little definitions for each 'type of fae' in the book, and the illustrations alongside them were great. Some of the explanations and storylines weren't fully Folkore accurate but again, this is a childrens book, and the content needs to be age appropriate. I personally really enjoyed it.

Eva Pacheco Fernandes - Age 12

Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire

by J.K. Rowling,

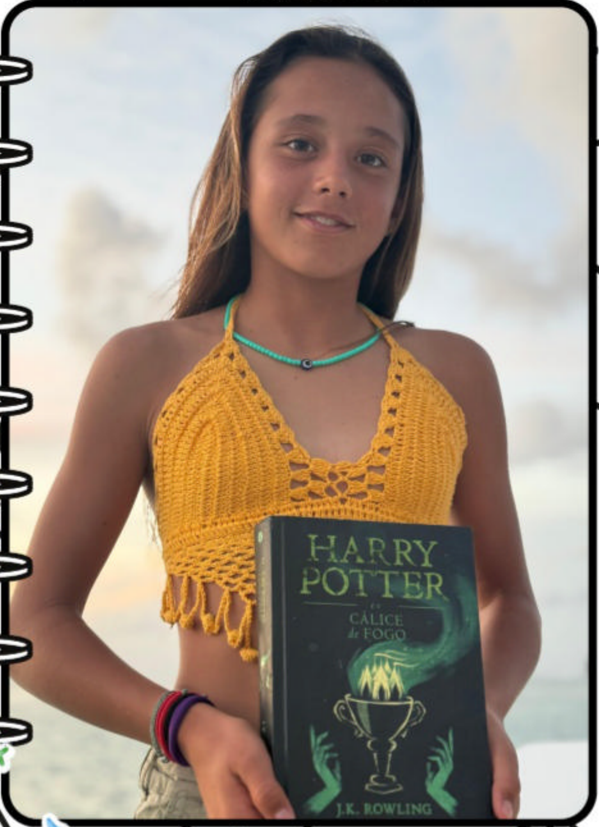
In this book Harry Potter gets sabotaged and is forced to compete in a Hogwarts competition,

I like the book because there is a lot of mystery, My favorite character in this book is Hermione Granger,

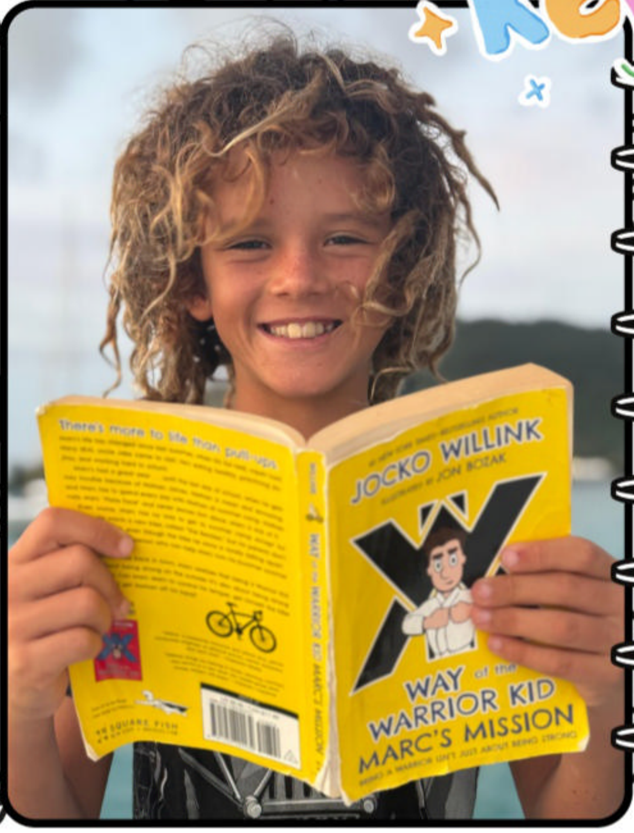
I would recommend this book for people who like a little mystery and non-stop excitement.

I give the *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* book a 5 star rating!!!

5.0 ★★★★★



Book Review



Mario Taiguara Pacheco Fernandes
Age 9

The Warrior Kid - book two, Mark's Mission,

by author Jocko Willink, illustrator Jon Bozak

Mark went from wimpy to warrior in just one Summer, Mark couldn't do one pull up in school when his uncle got there everything changed and by the end of summer he could do one hundred pull ups.

My favorite part is when Mark becomes friends with Nathan James,
I did not like when Nathan James bullied Mark,
I would recommend this book for people that are older than 6 years,
My favorite character is uncle Jake,

4.0 ★★★★☆

LSODE
SQUIGL CLUB
SQUIGL CLUB
WITH STORYFEST
PICTURE BOOK MAKER
ANDY GEPPERT

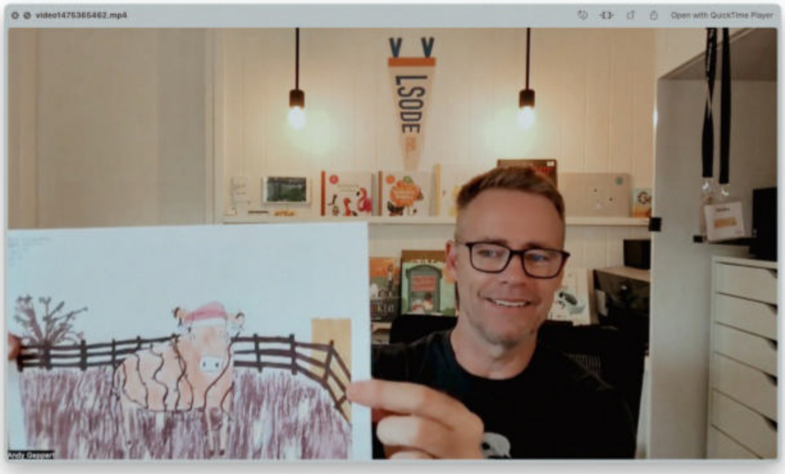
Andy Geppert's Squigl Club: More Than Just a Book Club

Every issue of Book World Magazine, one of our favourite features to pull together is our spotlight on book clubs. We've met some incredible clubs filled with passion, personality, and stories that stretch far beyond the pages. But for this children's issue, we wanted something different. Something new in a creative space where kids are already thriving. That search led us to Andy Geppert and a little club with a very big heart: the Squigl Club.

Andy Geppert is a much-loved Australian illustrator and picture book author, known for his warm humour, bold style, and tender storytelling. Books like *Meep*, *Joy*, and *The Balloon Blow Up* have earned him a place on many family bookshelves—but behind the scenes, he's also a dad to two young kids, an all-grown up kid, and a fierce advocate for children's creativity

He first encountered the students of the Longreach School of Distance Education while attending StoryFest Out West, a regional literary festival that takes authors and illustrators deep into the heart of rural Australia. For Andy, it was an experience he didn't want to leave behind. He remembers being told before he arrived that the country kids would have the biggest smiles he'd ever see—and they did. From presenting in a wool shed to getting roped into a game of handball between sessions, the whole experience was unforgettable. One student even told him they'd travelled 13 hours just to attend.

On the flight home, Andy felt something stirring. He didn't want the connection to end. He wanted to keep reaching those kids, kids who live on sprawling properties where the nearest town might be hours away, where the school day begins with a radio call and lessons come through a screen. Their classrooms



are kitchen tables. Their playgrounds are paddocks. They don't just live in the outback; they grow up in it. And Andy wanted to give them something joyful, ongoing, and creative to hold onto. That's when the Squigl Club was born.

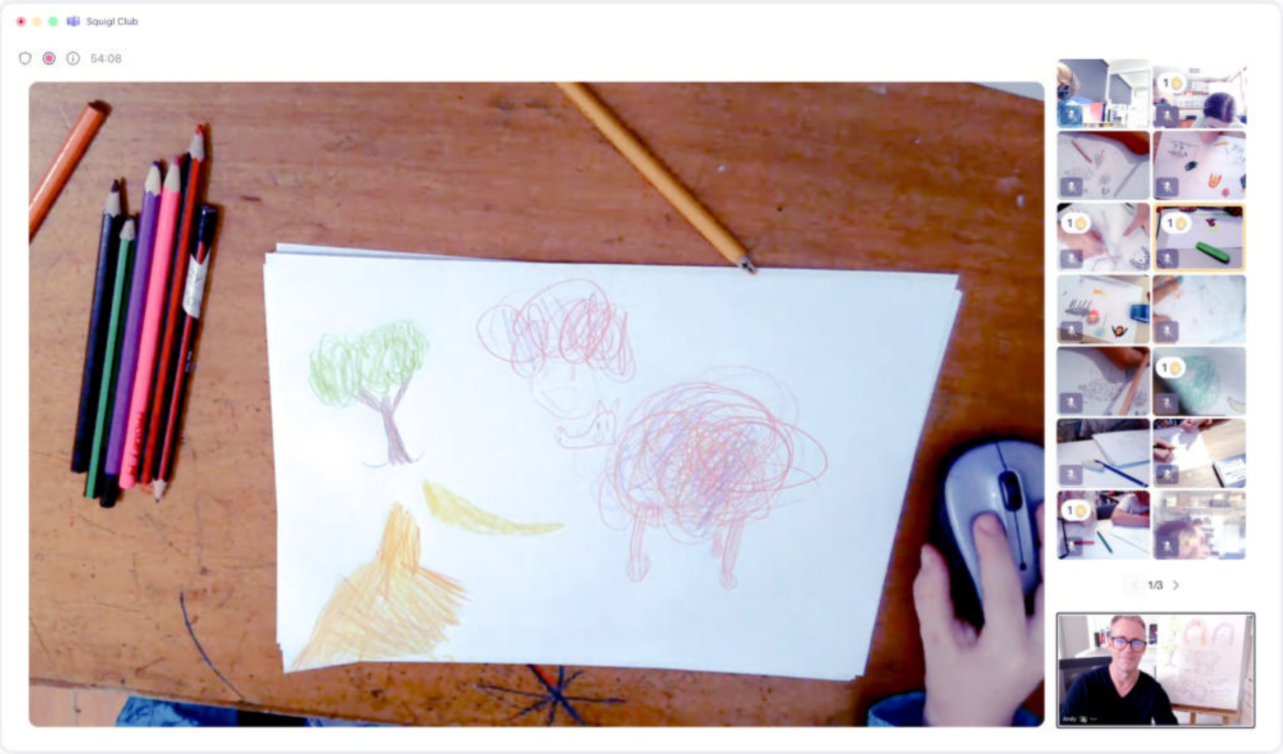
Run in collaboration with StoryFest and the Longreach School of Distance Education, the Squigl Club is an online book club—but not like any you've seen before. It meets eight times a year, once a month during school terms, with around 60 kids joining from across regional and remote Australia. And while they may be scattered by geography, the sessions are filled with energy, stories, and colour.

At the heart of every Squigl Club meeting is a book. Picture books from all over the world, handpicked by Andy, line the wall behind him on screen. A student gets to choose which one they'll explore together that session. Then, they read. They analyse. They talk about what makes the story work, how the pictures interact with the text, and why certain scenes hit harder than others. It's about stories—but it's also about seeing books as something kids can pull apart, question, and respond to.

From there, the creativity spills out into sketching. Andy shares a simple "contents page", breaking the session into segments. There's a peek into his own current projects as an illustrator. There's a bit of club business—like a colouring competition or creative idea someone emailed in. But most importantly, there's SQUIGL'ing. The kids draw, try new techniques, and push past perfection. They're encouraged to make mistakes, have fun, and to share.

Andy says the sessions often go over time—not because he's running late, but because the kids just don't want to stop. That in itself is the best kind of feedback.

One of the club's signature projects is the Calendar. It's a beautiful concept,



pairing children’s drawings with professional illustrators to create something collaborative and lasting. Early in the year, each child submits a drawing on a theme. This years theme is 'Things with Wings’, something simple, like a bee or a butterfly. That drawing is then passed to one of 11 illustrators chosen by Andy, who takes it and builds a full scene around it. Maybe the bee ends up in a veggie patch. Maybe the butterfly ends up in space. The final artworks become part of a limited-edition calendar, showcasing a blend of wild imagination and professional creativity. Andy recently shared how excited he was about this year’s line-up of illustrators—some of the best names in the business.

At the same time, there’s another drawing challenge that happens within the club. At the start of the year, every student draws a set prompt—something that’s the same for everyone. Then, at the end of the year, they revisit that drawing and do it again. Side by side, they can see how much they’ve grown. “That’s how you know it’s working,” Andy said.

What makes this club so important isn’t just the structure or the projects—it’s who it reaches. These aren’t kids from art-focused city schools or families who live around the corner from their local library. These are kids who live on remote properties, who may not have access to an art teacher or a picture book store. For many, Squigl Club is the first time someone has really encouraged their creative voice. And that voice matters.

“These kids are incredible,” Andy told us. “They’ve got ideas, they’ve got voices—and they've got creativity inside all of them that most adults wish they had. I am truly grateful to be able to dream a little bit with them.

You can feel the joy when Andy talks about the club. And you can feel the passion he has for children’s literature, for helping kids see the world a little differently, and for keeping imagination alive—no matter where a child lives.

To register your school or find out more, visit squiglclub.com and get in touch. Whether you’re a teacher, librarian, or passionate parent, if you want to bring something magical and meaningful to rural children, this is a book club worth knowing.

@andygeppert.books

Story
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